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DONALD HALL's reminiscences of childhood in New England, *String Too Short to be Saved,* was recently published by Viking.

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JAMES MERRILL is spending the Summer in Greece. A new collection of his poems is to be published in the Fall by Atheneum.

A collection of essays by BENJAMIN DE MOTT, *Hells and Benefits,* will be published this Summer by Basic Books.

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BEN MADDOW

In a Cold Hotel

THE WINTER BEFORE VICTORY, a light snow was falling along the whole Atlantic Coast from Maine to Delaware Bay. A train decorated with flags drew into a black New Jersey station. It was Sunday noon, late January of 1918. Feathers of steam from the locomotive mingled with the snow in the air, the snow in the sky, the landscape of snow piled up on either side. People in black rubbers stood up and down on these miniature hills, laughing and stamping their big, numb feet.

A famous comic of the time, bare-headed and wearing an immense coat with a fur collar, appeared on the observatory platform. The iron rail on which he leaned was iced like a cake. He smiled and waved and brushed the snowflakes out of his long eyelashes. There was a delegation from City Hall, with tall hats, upon which the snow was already piled half an inch thick. There was also a seven piece band, playing patriotic tunes in a brass cacophony that could be heard up and down the narrow factory streets.

The comedian held up a sheaf of Liberty Bonds in his thickly gloved right hand. There were ironic cheers from a dozen or so uniformed soldiers in the station, smoking cigars and drinking Red Cross coffee. All at once, the band stopped playing, but slowly, as if the spring of the victrola had run down.

The Erie Railroad tracks divided the town, like God, into right and wrong. On one side were mills and fire-escapes; on the other, lawns and curtains. A window on the third floor of the Passaic Hotel, which was definitely in the wrong, opened violently, and a man in a night shirt leaned out into the speckled air. His voice was extraordinarily deep, almost flamboyant.

"Damn you," shouted the man, "finish the tune, you blasted—" he paused, mostly for the effect, "—sons of Huns!"

The crowd turned about on its pedestal of snow, and waved and laughed. The famous comic condescended to laugh, too. The man in the hotel window said to the brass band, "Play! Play! Finish the tune, so's I can get back to sleep!"

Far more in concert than they had ever been before, the players

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turned the mouths of their cornets, their trombones, and the great brass tuba, all up toward him together. They stared at him from under their misshapen hats. "Papapah, papapah!" he said to them. At once, one of the soldiers in the station threw away his cigar, and walked across the hillocks of snow, and toward the Passaic Hotel. He heard the window slam down.

The young soldier went up the steps of the hotel and into the lobby. He circled it once, spitting experimentally into one of the cuspidors, and touching the fronds of the palm trees, potted in enormous, shabby tubs. At last he came around to the front desk.

The clerk said, "Well, soldier boy, what is it now?"

Soldier said, "Yes sir." Then he said, "I saw him at the window, sir. He must be awake."

The clerk rang 301 again. There was no reply. "Mr. Watkins is dead to the world."

The soldier nodded, made another turn around the lobby, this time kicking the cuspidor with the huge leather toe of his shoe, and plucking a bit of palm tree as he passed. He came to a staircase, made a right flank turn and went up about fifteen steps. He went past the redolent toilet, and then through two narrow corridors, each of them slightly warped, as if the hotel had been crushed flat, and then unfolded once more. After taking several false directions,—for some of the halls branched unexpectedly, rose by several steps, or by passages that resembled a ramp,—he came suddenly and directly before the thickly painted door of 301. A voracious noise came out of it, like the sucking and rasping of an iron pump.

"Poor man," said the soldier. He pushed the door open and went inside. There was no sign of a man, but on the bed was a sort of cocoon of quilts, from which there evoluted this monstrous vibration, the snore of a megalomaniac worm.

Dark roller shades had been drawn over both windows. Within the room were four steamer trunks, set up on the smaller end, on which the words THE GREAT NORMO were stencilled in white paint. The soldier said, "Sir?" Getting no civilized reply, he went and banged each green shade with his fist; they flew up like frightened birds, and winter sky light glared through filigreed panes into the room.

The cocoon slowly unrolled, and the man in the night shirt

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staggered out of bed, and had already pulled one of the shades down again, before he saw the intruder.

The soldier said, "Yessirree!"

The Great Normo replied, "Yessirree, what? I haven't said anything yet." He had a strange flat nose, with cavernous nostrils, hair in the ears, broad bones in his cheeks, darkly outlined and fascinating eyes, a real show business face. He said, "Great God in the morning, it's cold!" and flung the quilts around his shoulders like a cape. "Were you raised in a stable?" he asked the soldier.

The soldier appeared to be hypnotized by a black opera hat on top of one of the trunks. He advanced toward it, put the tips of his fingers to the fine silk. He said, addressing the hat, "I was raised in a two story shingle house in Davenport—"

"Whuzzat? Whuzzat?" cried the Great Normo, "Davenport—where?"

The soldier lifted the rim of the opera hat. A white pigeon, on the other side of the room, shook open the brown paper bag in which it was imprisoned, and flew to the top of the window, where it emptied itself in utter fright.

The soldier said, "Davenport, Iowa."

"What kind of a house?" said the Great Normo.

"It had a porch, front and back, sir."

"Fascinating," said the Great Normo. "Did it have any doors?"

"Oh, yes, sir! It had thirteen of them."

"What?"

"Doors, sir."

"Appalling," said the Great Normo. "Now go and shut it."

"The door, sir?"

"The door, sir."

The soldier went across the room and closed the door very carefully.

"Now," said the Great Normo, finding himself not the butt, but the mere crumb of a cigarette left in a saucer, "Open it again, and get out."

The soldier would not obey. Instead, he sat down on a chair, from which at the last possible moment, he retrieved a plate which contained the skeleton of three lamb chops and some execrable home-fried potatoes. He said to the Great Normo, "Sir, you don't mind my saying so, you look terribly tired."

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"What the devil!" cried the magician. "You woke me up before breakfast."

The soldier answered, "You're kind of a liar, sir. I saw you at the window, bawling out the brass band."

The Great Normo, attired in his goose-feather toga, walked around the boy, examining him from various angles. He said quietly now, and rather kindly, "In the first place, you're in the wrong room."

"No, sir," said the soldier.

"And secondly, I'm the wrong sex."

"Yes, sir," said the soldier.

"You have wonderful manners," said the Great Normo.

The soldier said, "You weren't around to teach me any worse."

"Hey? Hey?" said the Great Normo, astonished again.

"I've been told, by people who ought to know," said the soldier, "that you're my papa."

The Great Normo retreated several paces and struck his hand theatrically to his forehead.

The soldier said, once more. "Yes, sir." And then again, "Yes-siree."

The magician had retreated backward until he reached his bed. Holding on to the brass fittings with one hand, he fished behind him with the other, and retrieved a pint of liquor secreted under the pillow. He poured himself a neat slug, gasped, groaned, belched, sucked his teeth, shuffled his feet, wiped his lips, cracked all ten knuckles of both hands, and once again scraped and shuffled the callouses of his bare feet on the bare hotel floor.

The soldier, meanwhile, had found a glass tumbler among the refuse on the dresser. He said, "This glass sanitary?"

"I haven't used it yet," said his father, "if that's what you mean."

Curiously, the boy seemed very much at ease; he was not without emotion, but it was as if he had rehearsed this emotion many times before; and had finally mastered it. He went and took the bottle out of his father's fingers and poured himself half a glass. He examined the daylight through the lens of this amber and noxious fluid. He asked, "What is it?"

"Applejack," said his father. He watched the boy fill the glass, then, to the very brim. "Applejack," he continued, "—diluted with aromatic spirits of country skunk."

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The soldier drank it all at once, the bony box in his throat bobbling up and down. He looked at the empty glass and said nothing.

"Have a little more," his father said, "to kill the germs."

The soldier took another half glass, rolled it round and round in his mouth, swallowed it at last without any particular comment.

"Feeling sick?"

"No, sir."

"Not even a faint touch of mental paralysis?"

"No, sir."

The older man went and lifted the boy's face with one hand, examining it carefully, as though it were a piece of china. The boy suffered it. He had pale blue eyes and a sunburned skin. The Great Normo said, "Well, why not?" He went to the window, opened it, took a taste of snow, shut it again. "Why not? Why not? There are parts of the U. S., especially east of the Rockies, where I couldn't spit a loose tooth from a local train—without hitting one of my romantic moments."

"I'm not a romantic moment, sir."

"I doubt if you'd remember, son."

"Mama showed me the license."

The magician said, "Well, now. I've been married three times. Once in Norway. That was annulled—I was under age. And they didn't think I was capable, which was a God damn lie. And then the second time in Boston. On that occasion, I was dead drunk, beside all of which, the little woman was re-married twice herself, and is now living in sin with a Chief of Police and five naturally dull-witted daughters. And of course, there's the third and last—" he said, grinding his teeth audibly and dramatically.

"Maggie Roberts is my Mama's name," said the soldier.

"Maggie Roberts, Maggie, Maggie, damn her hide."

"Don't abuse her, Papa, if you got to mention her at all."

The Great Normo said, "I suppose you want me to go down on my prayer bones and beg to be forgiven? Well, I tell you, son, it's the other way around!" And then he added, rather softly, "How old are you, boy?"

"Nineteen. I was born on the 29th of February. So I figure I'm only five years old by birthdays. I was born on a Tuesday midnight. They said I had an exceptional head of hair."

"My congratulations."

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"Don't you believe in the stars, Papa?"

"Do I have any choice?"

"It stands to reason, Papa! We're weak individuals, and the stars, every one of them, big as the sun and the moon put together. So they've got to have some influence upon us, don't they? Don't you believe that?"

His father said, "When you get my age boy, you believe nothing but the whistle of the midnight train."

"Papa, I've got to straighten you out about a lot of things."

"What the devil is your name?" asked the Great Normo irritably.

"Same as yours, Gerald Thomas Watkins."

"That Maggie Roberts had a lot of nerve," said the magician. Then he came and touched the soldier's sleeve. "What rank are you, soldier boy?"

"PFC—private first class. Only there ain't anything particularly *first class* about it, and there certainly ain't anything *private*."

"Good with the bayonet, are you boy?" said the Great Normo. He seemed a little out of breath.

"No, sir."

"Crack shot?"

"Instructor told me, he said, point that gun around at yourself for God's sakes, not at me. He was very gangoofled."

"Eh?"

"Gangoofled, it's a word I made up, which I find very useful in the Army."

"What the devil does it mean?"

"Gangoofled. Like a bird with the feathers rubbed the wrong way."

"You've got a lot of imagination. You ought to get rid of it," said his father.

The soldier said, very cheerfully, "Papa, did you see the slogan they got on the walls down at the station? *'Eat all you can, and what you can't, you can!'* "

"Miserable bureaucratic pun," muttered the Great Normo.

The pigeon came down from the window shade and sat on his shoulder. He let it twinge at his hair. The boy kept watching him, and he, in turn, the boy; each of them sidelong and surreptitious. Finally the magician said, "Son, you expect to kill the Kaiser in those puttees?"

The soldier plucked at the wrappings of his legs. One of them

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had come loose, and he had to stoop to rewind it. He said, "I don't expect to kill anybody whatsoever."

"Ha ha! Where's your patriotism, boy?"

"I've been worried about that, sir."

"Scared are you? I thought you had faith in your stars."

"I do!" said the soldier. "I do, sir! But it ain't the bullet with my name on it, which I'm scared of, Papa. It's the one that says, *To Whom it may concern.*"

"You got your mother's mind. What else of hers have you got?"

"I can cross my eyes at will," said the soldier. He showed his father what he meant.

The Great Normo shook his head with dramatic sadness. His cheek twitching, he sat down again on the bed, and let the quilt fall behind him. Slowly, he decided to dress, talking almost to himself all the time. "I tried to see you a thousand times," he said. "Every time my circuit passed through Davenport, I tried to track you people down. You were never there, nor that dratted woman, either."

The soldier said, "Well, sir, Mama would hear you were in town, she'd see the posters and all, and she'd take and hide me and Sister Dear—"

"Which?" His face twisted curiously around the word.

"Caroline is her name, but Mama called her Sister Dear."

"Sister Dear," said the magician. "Ah, sister dear."

"Well, sir, she'd hide the two of us, until you left."

"Where?"

"Gold Star Moving Picture Palace," said the boy.

The Great Normo uttered a foghorn pronunciamento of contempt. He pulled on his trousers, which he drew inch by inch from under the mattress, and let the braces hang down until he could find his shirt.

The soldier said, "Don't you like motion pictures, Papa?"

The Great Normo replied, biting off the words with some precision. "I have never, never, drunk or sober, set foot in a place where they debase humanity by flattening actors into two dimensions."

The soldier cried, "Oh, you're wrong, Papa. You'd love it. When I was a little bitty kid, I'd sit right close to the piano. Suspense? Why, me and Caroline,—"

"Who?" said the magician.

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"Sister Caroline, like I told you."

"Ah."

"And then we couldn't hardly bear to wait until next week! Episode Nine! Don't fail to see it! Because some of these old foreigners have suspended him—"

"Him, who?"

"Why, Harry Houdini. They have got him where he is hung up by his ankles in this bicycle factory,—"

"What in kingdom come, is he doing in a bicycle factory?"

"Run by foreign spies, Papa!"

"Ha, the dogs! Spies, hey?"

"And Harry Houdini is suspended by the ankles! Over a vat of boiling acid!"

"They should drop him," said the Great Normo.

"How horrible, Papa!"

"Not at all. Harry Houdini is not a Dutchman, I believe; but he's a God-damned traitor all the same."

"Then why should they try to kill him?"

"Who?"

"The foreigners! With the black mustachios!"

"What are you yelling about, son?"

"The episode, the episode, Papa!"

"Harry Houdini has sold out his profession for a mere $1000 per picture."

"A thousand dollar bill buys a lot of pickles, Papa."

"Are you fond of pickles?"

"Crazy about them."

"I'm not. They give me flatulent eructations."

"What in the heck is that, Papa?"

"Gas."

"Well, I never felt no gas."

"So much for heredity."

"Mama said I was born under Mars and Jupiter, and that's why I favor these little sour mash pickles."

"Mars and Jupiter! You were born in a Yakima, Washington, apple-box."

"I know. But—" he said sadly, "Mama would never tell me the details."

The Great Normo was squeezing his broad, small feet into long,

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narrow oxblood shoes. "More to the point—" he said, "did she ever tell you about me?"

The boy said, "Many a time, sir."

"Well?"

"Well, she kind of admired you."

"Did she indeed?"

"Yes sir. She called you a handsome, generous, nice-mannered," he held back the rest, rather theatrically—"pig."

"What?"

"She said you were a pig, Papa."

The Great Normo stamped his feet into his shoes. "If I was a pig, she was a butcher," he said.

The boy came and helped his father put the mother-of-pearl stud into the back of his collar, where it was thick and glossy with starch. The soldier said, as flatly as he could, "She's died, Papa."

"Died?" said the Great Normo at last. He put both hands out and touched his son, then retreated and sat down into an arm chair, stunned and sad, crushing a package of round collars which he now drew out from under him, one by one. He asked the soldier for a cigarette, and sat smoking it greedily, inhaling as if it were food. "Died," he said.

"Yes, Papa."

"Finished."

"Yes, Papa. Last year. In the month of July."

The Great Normo went to find his tie. He fumbled everywhere, but found nothing. With his fist closed around this emptiness, he walked about and pounded against the four walls of the room. His son found a tie for him under a hat. "Died? Finished? Before me?" said the magician. "I never thought that would happen. Died? No! She wasn't that old, son. She had natural hair, the color of roses. Extraordinary effect!—Finished? Kaput? It ain't possible." He sat down, got up again at once. "How did it happen?"

The soldier said, "She died going up the stairs in the old house."

"No, don't tell me," said the Great Normo. "All death is nasty." Then he added bitterly and violently, "What kind of coffin would you prefer for the dear departed? We have the deluxe for thirty-seven dollars cash."

"It was heart trouble," said the soldier.

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"How can you lock up a lifetime,"—he glared wildly about him, as if to an audience,—"into a box with silver-plated handles? How is it possible?" He stopped moving; he panted as if he had been running.

The soldier went on, "It was a consequence of double pneumonia, Papa."

The Great Normo leaned on a trunk. Tears began to roll down from the corners of his eyes. The soldier scuffled about the room.

"I lost my partner!" cried the Great Normo.

"She hadn't seen you in nineteen years, Papa," said the soldier. "She was with me—mentally."

A long while passed. The soldier found a woman's slipper on the floor, and dusted it off. It had a pink pompom over the instep. He blew at it as if it were a dandelion.

The soldier said, "Pneumonia is a killing disease. And it was a particular hard winter. Even for Iowa. You remember the back stairs in the old house?"

"I was never there, son," the Great Normo answered. "I was the dirty part of her life."

"Well, Papa, I'll say this. You're nowhere as bad as she made out."

"Think so, boy?"

"You do people good, Papa."

"I try not to."

"You perform with magic—"

"There is no such thing, boy."

"Why, now, look here! You take a silk hat, don't you, Papa? And abbakadabba, a bunny, a bird and a glass of cold champagne."

"Cheapest trick in the world."

"You bring fun and pleasure to thousands, Papa."

"So does a whore."

The soldier said, "I have read my Bible and I don't cast no stones, Papa."

"May God bless you," said the magician.

He turned then, and made as if to embrace his son; his silk-striped shirt scraped against the khaki uniform and the brass buttons. Both men were terribly awkward in this embrace. The Great Normo said, "Would you like to see a piece of my act, son?"

The soldier said, "I'd be proud, Papa."

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The Great Normo turned to the wall opposite to the windows, and yelled as loud as he could, "Girlie! Girlie!" The soldier thought his father had gone mad; in a moment the magician took hold of one of the upright trunks and shouldered it up out of the way. There was a door behind it. The Great Normo shouted through this panel, "You come in now, girlie! I got a soldier in here," and turned and grinned at his son.

The door, through which several nails had been driven, on one of which hung a tinted photograph of General Pershing, was pushed open about two inches. A girl's voice said, "Go away. You're nothing but a dirty old man."

At this insult, the Great Normo seemed to regain all his gaiety. "I resent one of those adjectives," he said. "I don't know which."

The girl's voice said, "I hate you, Mr. Smarty-Wisenheimer, from the bottom of my heart."

The soldier took up the slipper again and handed it through the crack in the door.

"That's only one of them," said the girl. "Where's the other?"

The Great Normo cackled with laughter.

The door moved open another six inches and the girl moved slowly and sullenly into the room. She had a long black skirt and a white blouse with lace at the wrists; her face was an odd mixture of sensitivity and stupidity. She inspected the soldier from head to shoes, and then slowly back again. It made him feel extremely warm.

"Who is this? Don't tell me. Just go away. I already bought my Liberty Bond."

"My name's Gerald Watkins, the same as my Papa."

The girl swung her slow eyes over to the Great Normo, who was tightening his tie to within a hair of strangulation.

The Great Normo said, "That's right, girlie, he's my son, by george and by jimminy."

The soldier said, "Are you his daughter, ma'am?"

The girl said in a loud voice, "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"This piece of luscious femininity," said the magician, "is poisoning my life."

The girl said, "You're not just whistling Dixie."

The Great Normo pulled the trunk down on its side. He opened the lid, and spanked the lining to remove some of the dust. Inside

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was a pink pillow and a tufted pink lining. The Great Normo said, "Would you mind? I'd like to show my boy how it's done."

The girl said, "Some joke. Really. He's big enough, but is he old enough?"

The soldier said, "I've got to be, ma'am." He smiled with instinctive charm. "I'm going to Paris, France, as soon as I finish my training."

The girl was intrigued with this reply. She shuffled her stockinged feet over to where he was standing and stood on her tiptoes and looked into his eyes. "There's a Paris, Pennsylvania. Did you know that?"

"Why, no. Is that a fact?"

She went on, "And a Paris, Michigan. Also a Paris, Wyoming."

"Ain't that something?" said the soldier.

The Great Normo thought things were going too far. He said, "Will you get into the trunk, or do I got to beat you up again?"

The girl said, putting up her little finger to rub the soldier's shave the wrong way, "I can't. Not without my costume."

"Well, come on, get into your costume," said the Great Normo.

"My costume is downstairs getting washed, starched, dried, dampened again, and ironed. And even then, I doubt if it'll ever get itself clean."

"What the devil, fuss, fuss," said the Great Normo.

The girl said, pointing to the Great Normo with the same little pinky, "He don't even remember."

"Remember what, ma'am?" said the soldier.

"Spilled ketchup all over it last night."

"I call that criminal," said the soldier.

"I love you dearly," said the girl. "I truly do. I wish there was one million of you wherever I may be."

"There is," the soldier said, "that's the heck of it."

"Heck, heck! What is that word? Can't you say hell?"

"No ma'am. I took the pledge."

The girl gave him a dazzling smile of pure adoration. The Great Normo said, "She'll corrupt you, son." The girl hissed at him. He went on, "I found her in the five-and-dime. She was selling stove polish. Bored? She was yawning so profoundly, all you could see of her face was her little pink tonsils."

For some reason, this description annoyed the girl. She moved

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back and kicked him as hard as she could, forgetting she had no shoes on. The girl said, "I can go straight back to Forty-Second Street in New York City and get into the toe shoe ballet, which was just about dying to have me."

"Ballet! Ballet!" roared the magician, "On those feet?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!" The girl was shouting back at him. "They adored my feet! The manager told me so! He did! Mr. Ebenstein did! He did, he did, did, did!"

The Great Normo said, "And what else did that greasy little manager admire?"

The girl began to cry; she sank down and twisted herself over the nearest trunk.

The soldier said, "Oh, gosh, don't cry, please don't cry!" At the same time he noticed with some astonishment that she was inclined to be plump.

The Great Normo drummed on his own skull, upset in spite of himself. "She's not crying, she's doing a scene," he muttered. "She's an actress, not a woman. She's practicing in real life, what she might be called upon to perform on stage. And she's overdoing it."

The soldier said, "Now, Papa, don't be mean." And he said to the girl, "Are you really an actress?"

The girl stopped snuffling, bent down, straightened out, and without any further announcement, walked on her hands. Her head, with mouth reversed, began to sing *"K-K-K-Katy, Beautiful Katy."*

The soldier applauded. Her legs, thick, smooth and white, danced upside down all around him.

"If only she could do that in bed," said the Great Normo, with a certain melancholy.

The soldier turned his own head upside down, so as to speak to the girl more comfortably. "Is this gentleman an acquaintance of yours?"

"He'd like to be," said the girl, her eyelashes flickering, upside down. "Oh, he'd like to be! He's just spoiling out of his mind to be my friend."

"Ain't he a little bit old?"

"No, he's not. Which is unfortunate," said the Great Normo.

At this interruption the girl leaped back into a spiral arch; the arch straightened itself and delivered the magician a stunning

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slap. Pained, astonished, and over-balanced, he fell back among the trunks. At once the girl became meek and agreeable; opened the cover of the trunk, and squeezed herself inside, curling to fit inside the pink satin padding.

"Close it, soldier boy."

The soldier came and put the lid down carefully upon her. Immediately her feet popped out of an orifice at the bottom of the trunk, fully clad in the net stockings known in the trade as "kinky." At the other end, her head reappeared through a second aperture. She smiled sweetly at the soldier. The Great Normo rose up out of his corner. He had a carpenter's saw in his two hands, which he bent back and forth to show the savage flexibility of the steel.

He said to his son, "Watch, now. I'm going to saw that bitch in half, thus making two bitches where there was purely one before."

He knelt down upon one knee and began to saw through the lid of the trunk. The noise was horrible.

The soldier said, "Papa, I don't think I care to—"

"Of course you don't!" cried the magician, sawing madly away. "That's the whole point! It's repulsive!" He paused and blew away the not quite imaginary sawdust. "Sickening! And universal! And intellectual!"—(sawing away again)—"Eclectic! Vibrations of the psyche! Animal magnetism!" And then, with theatrical horror, "It brings out the insane doctor in all of us."

He had sawed almost half way down the trunk.

The soldier said in a sickly voice, "It's beautiful, Papa, just a beautiful trick."

"He wishes it wasn't," said the girl.

"Don't it tickle at all?" asked the soldier, anxiously.

"I got her hypnotized to where she feels no pain," said the magician. "The only one time it genuinely hurts, is when it cuts through the spine."

The girl uttered a horrific, unearthly scream.

"Please, please don't improvise," said the Great Normo. He was half an inch from the floor. A few strokes of the saw, and he scraped bottom.

"There, see that," he told his son. "Women are particularly fond of this trick. In fact, that's how I met your mother."

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The soldier was staring at the two halves of the trunk, now separated by a quarter inch of air. "May I have a cigarette?" said the upper half of the girl.

"Do you smoke, too?" he said, utterly astonished at this lack of virtue. But he got her a cigarette, put it between her lips, lit it for her with a kitchen match, of which he had several dozen in the upper left hand pocket of his uniform.

The Great Normo had gone to the window, breathing upon it to create a fine mist. "Middle of January," he said with tragic intonation, "and still no goddam heat in these places." He went and kicked at the radiator. It was invisible behind one of the trunks. "Wake up, janitor! Wake up, this is the twentieth century!" he cried to the mythological person in the masonry far below.

Then, exhausted by emotion, he sat on the lower half of the girl in the trunk. He said "Son, soldier boy, you know if the Proctor Theatre in Davenport is still there?"

"No, sir."

The Great Normo struck his palm to the region of his heart, "What happened?"

"It's a warehouse, Papa. For the Red Cross!"

"My God, couldn't they find any other place to roll their God damned bandages? The Proctor Theatre! It had solid gold-plated cupids on the balconies. And acoustics? If you scratched your head on stage, it could be heard way up in Nigger Heaven."

"Mama told me all about it," his son said.

"How I asked for volunteers in the audience?"

"Yes, sir."

"And she stepped forward, a fine big woman, peace to her soul?" He backed away into the room, and was reenacting the scene with mock sincerity. "How I sawed her in half? And took the two halves out to dinner—to Spanner's Chinese Restaurant?"

"Papa, I really don't—"

The Great Normo said fiercely, "How she borrowed my Waterman pen,—never gave it back, by the way—and drew a little heart on the lampshade? And do you know what she wrote inside?"

"No, sir," said the soldier.

"Well, if she didn't tell you, I'm not, either. I don't want her leaning down out of heaven and calling me a cad."

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"Heaven!" said the upper girl, snorting smoke like a dragon, "What makes you think she's in heaven?"

The Great Normo said, "She was determined upon it, kiddo. And what she was determined to do, she did. Me, for instance. I never asked her, but I woke up the next morning and found her sitting in a straight-back chair, watching over me. She'd gone and packed her six valises, and taken her daughter Caroline, who was all of a ripe sixteen, and these two ardent females then prepared to follow me all over these United God damned States.—Infatuation? No. It was idolatry."

"Then why did she leave you, Papa?"

The magician smiled, "The sin of pride?" he suggested.

"Hippity-hoppity, ha ha," said the girl in the trunk.

The soldier said to his father, "What about love? Didn't she love you anymore, Papa?"

The Great Normo answered him, rather slowly, "She left me a note, which she attached with stickum on to the mirror in my dressing room. It said, and I quote, *Happy hunting, buffalo!*— There was also a bunch of pink rosebuds. But those were from Caroline."

He unlocked the girl in the trunk. She uncoiled and lay upon the floor, stretching herself fore and aft, as if each vertebra had to be wiggled separately.

His son came and took hold of him. "Papa, papa! You loved her, didn't you, Papa? Did you love her, Papa? Or didn't you?"

"There's degrees and qualifications to love," said the magician.

"No, sir. There ain't," said the soldier passionately.

"He's young, oh he's so young, the boy is painful," said the girl. She got up off the floor and examined the bottom of her left foot. "About the only thing I've learned so far," she said, "is that the world is full of splinters."

The soldier pointed to her. "Papa,—what about this little girl right here?"

He turned to the girl and said, "What do you say? Do you want me to lie?"

"Not for my sake, no."

"You must love somebody, Papa. It's not natural."

"I do, desperately." The Great Normo went and cleared a space in front of the mirror, which was part of a birdseye maplewood

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dresser; so he could see himself, unencumbered and unadorned. "And I will reveal to you the name of the person by whom I am so enslaved and so enchanted." He pointed to himself in the mirror, at a spot where his left eye was distorted by a defect in the glass. "Him! Him! I love that ignorant slob from the bottom of my heart! Got a lifelong attachment to the man! Perverse, if you want to go so far! And why not? If he dies, I die. What about that, eh? What about that, boy?" He picked up a comb, ran it through his hair, threw it down as if in anger and disgust. "Not to change the subject, but when my elderly mother," he said, "moved into New York City from the wilds of Jersey, she discovered they had inside toilets. Toilets *inside?* She was profoundly shocked." He went to the hall door, picking up a pink turkish towel as he departed.

The boy called after him, "Papa, you want me to stay, or you want me to go?"

"Suit yourself, son," cried the Great Normo, going down and away through the twisted hall.

The soldier sat looking at the girl. There were bright tears in his eyes.

"Stay for a while," she said.

He nodded his acquiescence.

She said, "You've got a pretty uniform."

He said, "Itches like all get out."

She laughed at him. He went and slammed the door shut with his foot.

"Why do you stay with him?" he asked the girl.

"It's a job."

"That's not what I mean."

"Last week he borrowed a beautiful ten dollar bill off of me," said the girl.

"And never paid it back."

"How did you know?" said the girl.

"I know, I just know."

"Well, then, he took and bought me a two dollar box of brandied chocolates. With my own money! And you know what? It brought tears to my eyes! The same as you! Sincerely!"

"He won't trick me," said the soldier.

"He will if he can."

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"He won't! I'm tougher than he is! You'll see! I've got my Mama's character! I'm going to crack him open like a cockroach! And when I'm done, and the yellow's run out of him—I'm going to walk away, same as my Mama did!"

"He won't crack."

The door was shoved open, and the Great Normo flung the pink Turkish towel somewhere away from him. "No need to lock the door, was there?" he said.

"If it was locked, Papa, how would you get in?" he answered in sudden fury.

The Great Normo turned around to the girl and scratched his face slowly; at last he said, "Go get me some hot coffee. With a cup around it."

The girl didn't move. Still angry, the soldier said, "Go on! Do what he says!"

"I don't have the money."

"Money, money. People are mad about money," said the magician mildly.

The soldier found a half dollar in his pocket, tossed it in the air, caught it back-hand, and gave it to the girl. As she took it, she softly closed her hand on his before she left.

"He won't, you'll see," she said to the soldier, and closed the door. The soldier remained standing where he was.

"Won't what?" said the Great Normo. "Never mind, unimportant," he added at once. "Son, son, son!—Will you go into business with me?"

"No," said the boy. "What for?"

The Great Normo pointed to one of the walls, on which there was a rusty stain from the sink upstairs. "Look there: imagine: a darkness full of people. I can't see them, but I can feel them. Like you can feel a cat or a woodchuck watching to see you move. There's no feeling like that in the world! None! None whatsoever! That feeling! That's what I live for! The rest is nothing!"

The soldier stared at the wall with its enigmatic stain. He sprang up, as his father had done, and addressed the circle of the imaginary theatre. "It's over!" he told them. "It's all there is! The act is over! Go on home! Go on. Get out! We want a little privacy! Him and me! Father and son!"

"They won't go," said his father, going along with this double

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play. "We've got 'em fascinated, boy! Hooked by the balls of their eyes—!"

The soldier still looked through the soiled and magical wall; then all at once he turned his back on the ghostly audience, in a sweat and a fury, and began to dismember the steamer trunks. He pulled them ajar, and jerked out the small wooden drawers of which they were composed, and from these he drew contraption after contraption: a trick deck, with the cards sewn together with fine silk; a glass pitcher full of solid wine; then the silk flags of all nations, that could be pulled out one by one from a thimble; and hats that were hats inside out as well; and a saber that collapsed into its impotent handle; then three colored balls, which fell rolling to the floor, and which the soldier retrieved and began to juggle amazingly into the air: red, violet, yellow-green.

The Great Normo said, "How the devil did you learn that?"

"Houdini," said the boy. "In the moving pictures. I watched it twenty-three times."

But the trick made him sweat; it was not the physical exertion, but the three-part splitting of his brain: one ball leaving his left hand, another reaching his right hand, the third rising and falling, in the winter of this cold hotel room, his breath coming and going in fine white puffs of mist. Then he had enough; tossed the red, the yellow-green and the violet into the empty silk hat on the farthest trunk; and turned and drew, link by link, a two-foot length of galvanized bicycle chain out of his pants pocket. He said to his father, "Harry Houdini is able to tear this apart in three minutes flat. Can you?" He tossed the iron to his father, who caught it strongly and gracefully, and then bit the chain as though it were a false coin.

"Well! Pure steel. Expensive trick!" he said, contemptuously.

"It's not a trick, Papa!" said the soldier. "It's a demonstration of manly strength."

"Episode thirteen," said the magician, but he looped the chain around each hand. He said, "Watch closely, folks. I learned this demonstration of manly strength from my dear son Gerald, who learned it by pure osmosis from a Yiddish-Wop named Harry Houdini."

The magician then pulled the chain violently between his left and his right hand. Sweat began to run down into his collar. Un-

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der the moisture, the blue veins stood out thick and swollen under his powdered skin.

The soldier stood up as he watched. Slowly his anger was going, going; he wanted it back, but now it was gone. His father had bent double in the agony of his effort.

The soldier said, "Papa, quit."

The magician kneeled to the floor, straining, his face grown dark, almost monstrous; he sank down on his side, on the floor, grappling the chain as if it were alive and poisonous.

The soldier bent down, too. "Papa, Papa, please, you'll tear yourself into a heck of a rupture. Papa, Papa! Please,—please, Papa!"

The chain slipped out of the magician's left hand; knotted and cramped beyond endurance. All his visible skin looked as though he had doused it in water. The soldier seized the iron and threw it across the room until it rang against the audience wall. The soldier said, "Papa, I can't do it either."

The magician got to his knees, pulled himself to his feet near one of the trunks, and gasping, panting, opened the drawer and found a pair of very large blue steel scissors. "Want to join the act, do you, son?" He was ferocious.

"Why, no, Papa. I told you that."

"You told me, but you don't mean it!"

He grabbed the boy by the thick brass buttons of his jacket. "Come on! It'll only hurt for a day or two. Give me your trigger finger. I'll have you out of the Army in two seconds flat."

The soldier shoved him back as hard as he could. "Papa! Now you're acting cuckoo!"

The Great Normo said, brandishing the scissors, "I was never more sincere in all my life. I got one son, do I want him slaughtered? Do I give a hoot in hell for little Belgium? The Kaiser has got guns, boy, which if they're aimed in your approximate direction, can turn a man into a raspberry jelly!" The scissors slashed through the bloodless air.

"Pa, will you stop?"

"We're fragile, son," said the magician. "Do you realize the human skin? Is no more than one-thirty-secondth of an inch thick? I don't know how we survived all this long, to tell the God's gospel! And then—and then!—What?—They urge you to collect peach pits! Peach pits!—Why? So they can charcoal 'em black and

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put 'em into the canister of your gas mask." He inhaled, exhaled, twice, dramatically. "Fifty thousand years of slow civilization! *Per aspera ad astra!* Upward and onward! Excelsior! Charles Darwin! Mary Baker Eddy! And what's the crown and culmination of it all? Poison gas!"

He pretended, scissors gaping in his hands, to stagger about, to gasp, and choke like an alligator. "Ga-a-as! Ga-a-as!" he said hoarsely, "Ding-a-ling-a-ling! Sound the alarm!"

The soldier got hold of his sleeve and tried to pull away the brandishing blades.

"Don't do it, boy!" cried the magician. "Don't go to war! Stay with me! Join the act!—I'll show you the secrets of the visible world. Not the way—" pulling himself out of his son's grasp,—"you think it is! But," recoiling and recovering himself, "the way it really is!"

He plunged the two points of the scissors into his own shirt. They bent double; they were made of painted rubber. But his eyes glared, as though he had been genuinely stabbed. He said, "Lesson number one. As follows: there's nothing in the whole wide world that's sincerely genuine."

The soldier sat down resentfully. He felt obscurely taken and cheated. "I disagree with you, Papa!" he said at last.

"You won't quit the Army?"

"I can't!"

"Why not? Scared of Woodrow Wilson? I didn't vote for him, so you got no obligation."

"Don't be stupid, Papa!"

The boy wanted desperately to leave. Instead, he sat perfectly still. At last, neither of them spoke or looked at each other. The short afternoon was darkening; a low sky, and snowflakes heavy as crumbs from a crust.

The girl came back, carrying a steaming white cup, a cloth napkin, and a large round spoon. The Great Normo took them from her in silence. The girl looked at the soldier, and said, "You're still here, poor boy?"

"Oh, I'm going."

"Go on, then!" said the magician; and put the spoon in his pocket and the cup to his lips. "What are all these lumps?" he complained.

"Noodle soup," said the girl.

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"What are you trying to do, nourish me?" He went to the window, shoved it open and threw out the cup and the napkin. Neither made a sound, falling or fallen. The snow was growing deep and soft outside, on the hills, the marshes, the Jersey canals with their iron bridges, and the long curving right-of-way of the railroad tracks.

The Great Normo shut the window hard and tight. "He's turned us down, girl. He won't come with us."

The soldier was unwrapping and wrapping the puttee on his right leg. "I want me an honorable discharge. And a pension to go 'long with it. I'm nobody's dern fool—"

"Nineteen years of age," interrupted the magician, "and already he's turned sensible." He no longer addressed his son. He talked to the window, the wall, even to the girl. "Gumption! His mother fed him—Iowa mush and mama's milk. Big bones, big head. Take a look at him, girl! The uniform is busting out with muscles! But not the gumption to go with them. Hup, tup, trip, fuh! You don't have a brass button that ain't shined up like a star in the sky."

The soldier swallowed the bitter taste in his mouth. He said, "Don't run down the stars, Papa, they're mighty important."

"The stars, ha!" cried the magician. "Ever swim in the Ohio River by night in the month of April?"

"Never had the time, sir."

"And flat on your back, and look up at the Milky Way?"

"I can't swim," said the soldier.

"Son, son, there's no hup, tup, trip, fuh—up there. It's all wildness, son. Wildness beyond belief! Those stars drink applejack together and make love in the sight of the One Eternal.—"

The girl said, very coldly, "Oh, shut up, heaven's sake. There's more to life than making love."

The Great Normo said, "That's true, and that's sad, girl!" He sat down on the bed. All at once he seemed completely exhausted. He hadn't shaved at all, and now he plucked at the grey bristles along his neck. The soldier was putting on his long overcoat at last. The girl helped him with the button holes.

"Papa," he said, "I got one hour left, Papa. The New York train leaves at three sharp."

The magician made some sort of affirmative growl. His son said, "Want to walk with me to the station, Papa?"

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"Station?"

"Erie Railroad Station."

"Don't believe I will, son." He looked to the icy window. It was strange outside, and growing stranger still; all above was the darkness of winter afternoon, but glowing with the white inner fire of crystalline snow. And all the traffic went rolling silently by, iron rims on the wagons, iron shoes on the horses, and iron mud-guards on the big, square automobiles. "Don't believe I will," he said, forgetting, like an old man, he had said it once before.

"Well, then," said the boy. He looked for his hat among the furniture and the confusion. The girl found it for him and put it affectionately on his head. He took it off at once; out of politeness, perhaps; and held it in his hand. "It was nice to talk to you, Papa. I'll just mosey along now."

"Son," said the magician.

"Yes, sir?"

"Care of yourself."

"You know me, Papa."

"And boy—?"

"Yes, sir, Papa."

The Great Normo said, without a trace of enthusiasm, "Catch the Kaiser for me, will you? Do that little thing. Bring him home in a chicken-wire cage."

"Not me, Papa," said the soldier. "You got the wrong boy." He went to the door. He was half-way out when he thought to turn and say, "Girlie," in a tone much like his father's, "Care to walk me along to the station?"

"Not right now," she said.

"I'm going to have a meal over to the station restaurant. I got my mind on flap-jacks."

"I have to rehearse, love-bird," said the girl sweetly.

"Go on, walk him to Paris, France," said the magician.

The girl shook her head. The boy tossed his hat in the air, caught it on his head, squinted out the window, and said at last, "Well, folks, see you in the funny papers."

"Katzenjammer Kids," said the girl.

"Happy Hooligan," he replied. He went out and down the cold and creaky hall.

His father got up then, found a bit of cracker in the ash-tray, ate

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it, and went back and sank into the bed. Some time passed. He pointed to the row of thumb-sized marks on the wall. "Just look here, would you? Chaps too lazy to get out of bed, have snuffed out their cigarettes on this wall.—Now, ain't that the saddest thing you ever saw? Ain't it, girlie?"

The girl had begun to put the room to rights. She took off the pillow case and stuffed the Great Normo's laundry into it. She moved about very swiftly and softly.

"Steal a couple of towels while you're about it," the magician said.

The girl said, almost in a whisper, "That was no way to say goodbye. It was awful. Awful."

"What did you want me to do, kiss him?" Fully clothed as he was, he shucked off his shoes and pulled the quilts around him.

The girl was at one of the windows, and with a corner of the laundry she wiped a circle on the glass so she could look down. She said, "He's coming down the steps of the hotel. Oooh! Oooh! He walks so straight. Honestly, he's so handsome."

"From that angle, anybody's handsome."

"Wave to him. He's looking up here."

The magician rolled over in bed to where his stubborn back was to the windows. Nevertheless, he was shivering.

"He got on my nerves," he said. "Had he stayed one minute longer, I'd have told him the truth. Maggie Roberts! She wasn't his mother at all."

The girl, guessing what he was about to say, put both hands over her mouth.

The magician said, "His sister Caroline, that was his Mama! Not Maggie—that old churchified sinner. I did it for revenge! And so did little Caroline, believe you me. She never told him, and Maggie never told him, and that's how it is. Should I have told him? No! It's the truth! But what's so sacred about the truth?"

The girl said, "Oh God, he'd just about die!"

"Ha, ha!" said the magician. He got up, draped in the quilt, and twisted the heavy trunks about, to have something equal to himself to struggle with, heavily and forcibly.

"When pretty Caroline began to get sick of a morning, Maggie Roberts brought in a man about six feet tall. Face like John L. Sullivan. I thought he'd come to assassinate me. Until he took off

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his scarf and I saw his collar reversed. She married me, Maggie Roberts, and took the midnight to Davenport. All three of them gone. Should I have told my son that? Should I, girlie?" he shouted at her.

She shook her head, her fingers still over her mouth, but woven together like a mesh. He looked through the frosted, fanciful window. Snow fell past his glance, like worlds going by. Quite suddenly, he shoved open the window as high as he could; he leaned into the snowstorm, and yelled, "Soldier! Soldier!" There was an indistinct answer, as if someone were shouting back from the shaft of a mine.

"Don't!" cried the girl. "Don't tell him! Don't ever tell him!" She clasped him round the waist.

"I'm too late, anyway. Good or bad. Poor boy,—he's turned the corner and gone," he said. And freeing himself from the girl, "You should have gone along with him."

"No!—No, no, no."

"Why not?" said the magician. "What's the big attraction here? Hey?"

"If you don't know why," answered the girl, "I can't tell you!"

"Look now, girlie," said the magician, his voice smoking in the cold, "No! Turn around and look at me!—You see? I lock the door every Thursday at twelve noon. Have you noticed that? Have you?" his voice became driving, harsh, and unnaturally precise. "I lock the door, and fill the sink, and dye my hair back to what it was twenty years ago. Well, girl—some Thursday I won't do it. I'll let you see my natural color. It'll make you just as sick as it makes me. Which I hate to get old! I hate it!—All right. Why stick? What's your reason?"

"It's personal," she said.

"Well, for sure, it isn't the money! I see to that, don't I?"

"I stay for sentimental reasons," she said.

"Well, don't! Don't. I've known a million so-called women, and don't remember even a one. Nothing! Except, of course, they all had something wrong with them!"

The girl leaned on a chair, looking away. His voice was so cruel and loud; she thought, suddenly, how much she disliked his fits of truth.

"—Wrong with them," he was saying. "Ears too big, or poor thin

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hair. Big nose, little hips. Or unhappy with their miserable husbands. Or choked up inside. Or busted loose. Wild nerves. Nerve tonic by the quart bottle. Or some damn screw loose rattling around in their heads. Oh, girlie, girl, I've lived a life of careless love! By picking on cripples."

"What kind of a cripple am I?" said the girl, very quietly.

She came and put both hands on the corrupted knobby brass of the magician's bed. "What kind of a cripple, will you tell me, please? I'm not angry. Just tell me."

The Great Normo said, "You always think I'm talking about you. I'm not. I'm talking about history."

"What kind of a cripple?" she screamed at him suddenly.

The Great Normo lifted her hands from the brass bed, and kissed them in the innermost palms. She drew back as far as she could, but not so far that he had to let go. "What kind of a cripple do you believe I am?" she said softly.

"Peg O' My Heart, I Love You So," he said; he had a fine smile; different from his professional one. He kissed her. "You've got an ugly heart, that's why."

The girl said, "That's true."

Then he turned once more to the window, the girl leaning against him, and cried out, "Soldier! Goodbye, soldier! Goodbye, boy!" And after a moment, still in the huge tones that carried easily to the railroad station, and made people turn around, to stare upward in their snow-shaped clothes, "Kill the Kaiser, kill him, boy!"

He waited. Someone too far away to see, a soldier to judge by his stance, unlikely by now to have been his son, waved both arms and uttered a faint, far-off Indian whoop. The magician reared back and laughed. "Unreal, unreal," he said to himself. All at once, his misery was gone. He did a time-step, neatly, among the trunks.

"Girlie, girlie-girl," he told her, "we've got a great year coming up. Bookings clear up into April, which is in Ogden, Utah.—Tara-tarata-tum."

"I know."

He found his spotted scarf, and wrapped it clownishly around her neck. "Ever see an Injun, girlie?"

"No."

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"There's real live buckaroos on the main stem of Ogden, Utah. Ugh! Ugh! How! How!"

The girl pulled off the scarf, but she found herself smiling. Snow blew in over the gritty, coal-sooty sill.

The Great Normo turned again, entranced by the window. At the far end of the station, the brass band strangled a tune that might once have been patriotic.

"Oh, Jesus, God, this is a wonderful country!" the magician said. "America! The U. S. of A! Niagara Falls! Grand Canyon! The Coney Island Boardwalk! Sea breeze and steeplechase! Grand, just grand! Be there by August, girlie!—You smell the snow? It gets colder every year."

"Does it?" she said.

"When I was young, we used to have summers where we have winters and vice versa."

"Did you really?"

"We did, dear, really we did."

"But I mean, really?"

When he had no answer, she said, as if it was part of the same query, "And that was all a lie about the boy and his sister, wasn't it?"

"Whatever you say, dear," he told her.

"But was it?"

"Sure."

The train began to chug and strain into a switchback, turning itself around to go back to Jersey City, and to the lighters, the barges, and the ferries; the transports, the four-stack steamers, shouldering through chunks of Hudson River ice, toward the chances of the open ocean; and then to Paris, and the first of the impossible Wars. Was it his son's train? Most likely not.

"Girlie, girlie," he said. "Don't go marching off to fight."

"If you want me to stay, I'll stay."

"Let the Kaiser live to a ripe old age, girlie."

"I hear his left arm's all small and shrivelled up," she said.

"Stay with me," said the Great Normo, "you'll have good times. I mean it, woman."

"Can I shut the window?"

"No."

"Shall I get us some hot coffee?"

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"Why not?" he said, "We only live once."

She went to the door, and came back and shook the Great Normo's coat; it jingled, and she fetched out a quarter from the left hand pocket.

"Bring change," he said to her.

She leaned against the open door. "If I thought I knew how to make you happy," she told him, "but I don't." He grinned at her. He began to do knee bends before the open window. She went on, "Oh, I love you. I love you very much. But why? Can you tell me one good reason why?"

"It's the stars, girlie. The stars!"

The exercise made him breathe deeply; the air had the sour-apple taste of falling snow.

The girl looked back at him fondly as she left. She would leave and abandon him long before Ogden; but the time was not yet.

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

Versions from Antonio Machado

The Ilexes

Woods
of Castilian ilexes
on slope
and eminence
hillsides
and sudden fastnesses
woods, that
dense with a brown and brambled dark
are where
in the ilex tree
strength and humility agree.
As the axe
goes through
fills you with empty space
will no-one
speak
ilex trees
to celebrate your qualities?
The oak is war
the oak
spells valour
mettle, rage immoveable
that writhes
and ramifies—
a tree of caste
that, thewed and ruggeder
is more the master.
The tallness
of the oak
appears
to knot
compress
its hardiness,

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an athlete who
sinks his rooted weight into
the soil below.
Pine is sea and sky
and mountain:
planet!
Palm:
the desert,
distance and the sun
the thirst, the cool
spring we dream of in
the rigid plain.
Who was it read
in the legendary beech
historic dread?—
battle
crime,
and who
has seen a beechwood in
a forest full of pine
and does not watch disquieted?
The willows
are the riverbank
the lyres
of spring, beside
the slow or swift-
ly shifting flow
that spreads
across the backwater
or goes
contracted
through tumultuous narrows.
They imitate
in their eternal shivering
the living waves
of silver
at the river's spate.
Elms
in their parkland copses are

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the good groves
where
Hope, bright-haired
must soon inherit
the white
of Contemplation.
The tree
that bears it
bears
the apple's scent;
the aroma of its leaves
cleaves
to the eucalyptus tree,
to the orange
fragrance of the flower;
and the garden's
elegance is
the dark unbending cypress's.
And you
of the rustic stance?—
the ashen trunk that has
neither grace nor arrogance
and branches
that are colourless;
'verdurous' would not
describe your leaves
(swart ilexes)
nor catch your vigour
without strain and your
humility that's firmness.
Nothing
shines
in the round
spread summit—
neither
your foliage
that's green-obscure
nor the yellow green
that marks your flower.

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There's
nothing
handsome or superb
or warlike
in your bearing,
and in your mood
no petulance:
erect, awry
with that humility
that yields
only to the law of life,
you grow
and live
the best
that you know how.
The land itself
was turned into
a tree in you
brown ilex, burned
by the sun
and frost, by all
August and January
can do,
and you have stayed
constant
beneath the snowflakes and the threads
of rain,
made
(as it were) a pact
with the lands around
you, to remain
impassive
sound, serene
and sturdy—
ever-green:
and you have kept it
whether in Aragon
and its marches, or
where your darkness

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perches on
Pamplona's military peaks;
and in
Extremadura,
in Castile
our Spain's
creator,
on level
ridge and mountain,
the plateau
encircled by
a youthful Duero
and along
the snaking Tagus through
Toledan land
and where
in Santandér
your way draws seaward.
A frank
frown of Castile
your dissonance was heard
in Moorish Córdoba,
and you are there
wooding Madrid,
stately and sombre
in the chill
of Guadarrama,
Castile's disdain
that must correct
the vanity, display
and fever
that infect the court:
I know
how the most distinguished
brushes have painted you
complete with greyhounds
and with chargers, how
Augustan poets
sang

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and royal huntsmen made
you deaf with muskets: you
however, are the field
and hearth
the tutelary shade
of the good villagers
who wear
brown serge
and cut for brands
your branches with their naked hands.

Poem of a Day: rural meditations

Behold me
here—the nightingales'
apprentice, master
of *la gaya scienza*
formerly:
I teach
the living tongues
to a damp and bleak
sombre and straggling
village that belongs
half to La Mancha, half
to Andalusia,
Winter:
the fireside:
in the street
a fine rain falls
alternately as mist or sleet.
I
a husbandman in fancy
dream of fields.
O Lord,
how well thou dost
and how
it rains!

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on vineyards and on olive-groves
fields of barley and of beans:
a still
a small and steady rain.
How the sowers of the grain
will bless
like me
Your bounteousness,
and those who live
by gathering
the olive,
those who hope
for the fortune of a meal
and have
all that they own
in the year's deceitful wheel—
this
and every year that's gone.
Rain,
rain on!
and alternate
as mist or sleet
and then again
reverting to a tenuous rain
rain, Lord, rain!
My chamber keeps
a wintry light:
the afternoon
through rain and glass
sifts its grey illumination—
a medium where thoughts may pass.
The clock
neglected in its corner
looms distinct:
its tick
forgotten, since repeated,
now beats on
within my consciousness
and boring, bored

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a uniform metallic heart
    speaks its one and only part:
        tick
tock:
    in villages like these
        does one catch
the pulse of time?
    Truceless
        before the clock
one, rather, fights
    against monotony
        that, in these villages
alights
    to measure
        the passage of their vacancies.
But, clock, is yours
    this time of mine—
        are mine your hours?
(Tick, tick)
    There was a day
        (tick, tick) that passed
and that which I
    most loved
        death made away.
A knell from far
    fades
        into the rain's
minute, untroubled chime
    that rings against the window panes.
        A husbandman in fancy
I
    return to fields.
        Lord,
how they'll bless
    your bounteousness—
        those
who sow the bread.
    Lord,
        is not the rain you bring

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law in the ox-ploughed field
and in
the palace of the King?
Bounteous water,
leave
behind you, life—
you that go
drop by drop, and
spring by spring
and river upon river flow,
that, like this time
of weariness supply
the sea
with transitory life,
with all that seeks nativity
to germinate
to spring
and be.
Be
merciful
for you become
tomorrow's
early ear of grain, and
you restore
tint in the field
and in the flesh
and more:
reason
madness
bitterness
the grief that wishes for
and yet remains unsatisfied
with all belief.
Dark
is coming down;
the wire
reddens within the bulb,
gathering to a glow
with scarce more show

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than wax on a lucifer.
God only knows
where (under these tomes, reviews
and scribblings)—
ah, here they are:
my spectacles.
New books.
One
I open
by Unamuno.
Oh, the chosen
cherished spirit
of the Spain that shall inherit
our coming life
our resurrection!
This
teacher of a country school,
unheard of,
he knows no defection,
Rector of Salamanca!
Yours—
the philosophy you call
dilettante and inconstant
balanced
upon its slender rope—
nourishes, great
Don Miguel
his buried hope.
Water
of the good spring,
fugitive
always; always living;
poetry—
that cordial thing.
Architectonic?
(Do you look
for architecture
in the wind,
in the soul's structure?)

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Rower,
sailor
across that sea
which has no shore.
Henri Bergson:
Les données
immédiates
de la conscience.
Is this
another Gallic artifice?
This Bergson
is a sell—agreed,
Maestro Don Miguel?
He's no Immanuel Kant—
it's the immortal somersault
his writings want;
this devilishly clever Jew
locates
free will
within his mind's own gates.
Ah, well—
every wiseman has his problem,
every idiot his theme.
And yet
it still would seem
to matter whether
we, in a short and evil life
shall live
as either slaves or free.
But if
(as the poet shows)
it's seaward all our living flows—
all will come
to the same thing.
Oh, these villages!
reflections
readings
annotations
soon will end

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in what they are:
the yawns
of Solomon.
Is it all
solitude of solitudes
vanity of vanities
as saith Ecclesiastes?
My waterproof,
umbrella
and sombrero:
the rain is moderating—
shall we go?
Night:
the talk is on
in the rear room
at the apothecary's
where they define
what makes the liberals such swine
and Don José
scents consolation
in the return (predicted)
of the conservative administration,
all spicing it
from the inexhaustible resources
of a people's wit:
'The past
and future
are the same.
Others
like us, will blame
the government.
All changes,
comes
and goes.' And then,
for arbitration:
'No evil lasts a century
to plague a nation.'
'And the beans
have come on splendidly—'

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'These rains—'
'The barley—'
'And they'll flower
by March
unless the frost—'
'The labourers
will count the cost
in sweat—'
'Torrents—'
'Seas
would scarcely quench the thirst of olive trees.'
'In other days—'
'The rain would rain
at the Lord's will, then
as now.' 'Until
tomorrow, gentlemen.'
Tick
tock
tick-tock: one
day has gone
like any other
says the monotone of the clock.
My table bears
les données de la conscience
immédiates.
It's adequate
this I
that's fundamental
and at times
creative and original, that
mingling in mortality
its freedom and contingency,
can feel
can see, and yet
must overleap the confines
of its narrow keep.

Baeza, 1913.

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Waters

I

Sun in the ram. My window
stands open to cold air.
Evening wakens the river—
hark! the rumour of the water there.

II

Gregarious sound begins to wane
within the ancient hamlet, storks
crowning its ample turrets. In the plain
the water speaks from solitude and rocks.

III

As before, my thought
is water's captive;
but of water in the live
rock that is my heart.

IV

Can you tell the water's sound?
Whether of summit or of valley,
plaza, garden, orchard ground?

from "Galerías"

Blue mountains, river, the erect
and coppery wands
of poplars in their delicacy,
and on the hill, the almonds white—
oh, snow in flower, butterfly in tree!
A bean-scent on its breath,
the wind goes by
runs in the plain whose solitude is gay.

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Guadalquivír

Oh, Guadalquivír!
in Cazorla I saw you a spring;
today, dying in Sanlúcar.

A gushing of clear water
under a green pine
you were: how keen your chime!

Like myself, close to the sea,
river of brackish mud, do you
dream of your source's clarity?

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HENRY GIFFORD

Seven Paragraphs on Antonio Machado

He was able to fuse personal tragedy with a landscape. By contemplating an austere scene,

tierras pobres, tierras tristes,
tan tristes que tienen alma,

he could bring to expression the sense of irremediable loss. His own feeling is inscribed on the terrain. It becomes the voice of holm-oaks; of an ancient elm on a bend of the Duero; of the people who wear serge and warm themselves in the high sierra. The few pages he wrote about himself, by way of preface at odd times to his poetry, are all that he wished to disclose outside the limits of verse; in the verse then we should encounter him, defined by his proximity to trees and men, in a certain climate. Did the plains of Soria, he asks in one poem, make their way into his spirit, or had they always been there? It is a perfect correspondence; Castile and Antonio Machado are made one.

Born in Andalusia, he met Castile as the initiation into love, tragedy and truth. For Russian poets, in the time of Pushkin and Lermontov, the movement had been in a reverse direction, from the steppe to Caucasian brilliance and plenty. But in Machado's imagination the bright scenes and scents of Andalusia have the quality of a mirage; they are native but alien; the *tierra de alma,* real land of his feelings, took the form of grey rocks and barren slopes,

montañas, serrijones, lomazos, parameras,

and it stands in the centre of his vision, as it stands in the centre of Spain. A region of military rigours, pride, cruelty, patience and boredom; touched by the transient grace of spring; but harsh and stony, domain of the eagle and solitary vulture; where the traces of human cultivation are noted as *humildes,* lowly. Here the domi-

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nant hue is *pardo,* dun monochrome of the earth, nightingales, peasant cloth, and especially of the holm-oak, in which "the plain itself was made tree."

To express the plain one requires a Latin language, the genius of which fosters Spanish stoicism and traditional Roman piety for the soil.

De su raza vieja
tiene la palabra corta,
honda la sentencia.

Como el olivar,
mucho fruto lleva,
poca sombra da.

He has a language solemn, resonant, and concise; apt for the brief summary remark—

El campo mismo se hizo
drbol en ti, parda encina

and also endowed with amplitude and firmness of outline—

a la espalda la escopeta,
entre sus galgos agudos, caminando un cazador.

The effect is always one of gravity and severe truth, in words going far back into the Mediterranean past, and moving in stately rhythms. The language makes for objectivity and control:

agua pura y silenciosa
que copia cosas eternas.

It has a mathematical grace from his hands and a musical substance.

There is a necessary bond between landscape and language: a landscape only comes to its full manifestation through the language that gives it a name:

¡ Colinas plateadas,
grises alcores, cárdenas roquedas
por donde traza el Duero
su curva de ballesta

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en torno a Soria, oscuros encinares,
ariscos pedregales, calvas sierras,
caminos blancos y álamos del río,
tardes de Soria, mística y guerrera,
hoy siento por vosotros, en el fondo
del corazón, tristeza,
tristeza que es amor! ¡ Campos de Soria,
donde parece que las rocas sueñan,
conmigo vais! ¡ Colinas plateadas,
grises alcores, cárdenas roquedas!

At the outset, mere names and colours of things—"silvered hills, grey ridges, purplish rock-lands"—and the same at the conclusion: these are the given, the essential, colour and form external to man, but entering his world once he has named them. Next, the image of Duero, curved like a crossbow around Soria, affirms the military past: Soria is *mística y guerrera,* mystical and warlike; these attributes of Castile are to be found in history. With Machado we are moving constantly in a world of fact—"dark ilex-groves, rough stony places, bald sierras, white roads and riverside poplars, afternoons of Soria." And feeling is kept separate from fact— "today I feel for you, deep in my heart, a sadness—a sadness that is love. Fields of Soria, where it seems that the rocks are dreaming, you accompany me. Silvered hills, grey ridges, purplish rock-lands." "Today I feel. . . . It seems that the rocks are dreaming. . . ." The distance is never closed. How, then, does the verse gain its irresistible appeal? By entire fidelity to fact; by the refusal to appropriate the landscape to sentiment; and by dealing in immemorial Spanish names—*colinas, alcores, roquedas; encinares, pedregales, sierras.* Machado's verse is a dry-stone wall. It is compact of serious nouns and necessary adjectives: *valles sombríos,* shade is the character of those valleys. In all the nine sections of *Campos de Soria* not a single adjective can be divorced from the object it goes with. Machado, to adopt Ruskin's phrase, is "content with expressing the unimaginary and actual qualities" of a scene. Thus the elm-trees of Alvargonzález,

sombra le dan en verano,
y en el otoño hojas secas.

He speaks of Soria pragmatically—

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Es la tierra de Soria árida y fría

—as, centuries before, Archilochus had spoken of his own island in the Aegean:

> Like a donkey's spine
> it stands crowned with rough woods,
> for it is no lovely or desirable place. . . .

Thus Antonio Machado committed to verse the image of Spain: the desolate uplands, decayed towns, and lengthening roads; old bridges darkening the waters, fortifications of lost military prowess; the sombre poor-house, and the melancholy Convent of Mercy in a tumble-down village; the idiot of the place; the dull conversations about politics and crops at the back of a chemist's shop; wasted lives, history that is no history, emptiness and despair. This image of Spain oppresses him, as Normandy oppressed Flaubert: *moeurs de province,* peasant greed, cruelty, doggedness; the inertia of the small gentry; bull-fights, gambling, the family tree and religion: to contemplate all these things is to remember Ecclesiastes. But whereas Flaubert raged inwardly against the meaninglessness of provincial life, and sought to shame it by perfect style, Machado put his trust in the revelations of the Castilian soil and the Castilian tongue. His poetry performs a discipline: it renders him the objective world, in the light of Spanish sobriety and the Old Testament.

Among virtues of the Spanish genius are solidity, detachment, boldness and ceremony. All these Machado exercised in full. Whatever he presents is solid with the weight of experience, planted there in the open. It has long since been recognised and possessed by his mind, and now it stands on its intrinsic worth: mountain butterfly, spring poplar, stricken elm or rainbow at night. So with people: the reprobate Don Guido, laid out in a mendicant's habit; the vacuous provincial at his club, "prisoner in the Arcadia of the present"; the idiot advancing "over the fields of God"; the nun in a railway carriage: each one is held steadily in the dispassionate eye. For Machado remains aloof, walking with Leonor in his dreams, but otherwise making no demands and allowing none:

Y al cabo nada os debo; debéisme cuanto he escrito.

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He claims for himself as poet the boldness of a captain wielding his sword: it is not the workmanship but dexterity of the wrist that counts. Finally, he brings a ceremonious ease to his friendship, writing the appropriate verses for Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Rubén Darío, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Pío Baroja, "Azorín," "the young meditator" José Ortega y Gasset, and many others. Compliment to his peers is always measured by self-respect.

The eminence of Antonio Machado, a mind erect in its solitude, comes from character—his own, and that of the severe and practical language which never fails him. Beauty of tone animates his plainest verses, rectitude of design controls them, brevity and reticence are their guardians. He is the master of unobtrusive grace and of quiet finality. Knowing his compass, and keeping only what matters to him in view, he has won the most difficult of attainments in this age: self-possession. The cycle of poems *Campos de Castilla* begins with his own portrait, which is also a declaration of independence.

Hay en mis venas gotas de sangre jacobina,
pero mi verso brota de manantial serena. . . .

Radicalism and assurance; the determination not to tolerate; but above all obedience to the imagination, that imposes its own law. A poet who listens to the one voice—

y escucho solamente, entre las voces, una

—puts on the strength of his native language. He gets rid of the echoes confounding truth, to build the vocabulary of his own vision, in a few dozen authentic phrases: *despacito y buena letra,* as the copy-book required. Taking its own time, forming the letters clearly, a poetic mind presents the fair copy which alone will be kept. The integral Spain of Machado's record—

La hermosa tierra de España,
adusta, fina y guerrera
Castilla, de largos ríos

—survives through the imagination. Verse, we know, is the great agent of sympathy. Those of another day and place are admitted through poetry like Machado's to the landscape of human meaning, *tierra de alma.*

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NORMAN N. HOLLAND

Shakespearean Tragedy and the Three Ways of Psychoanalytic Criticism

"Shakespeare," said Buck Mulligan's friend, "is the happy hunting ground of all minds that have lost their balance." Be that as it may, Shakespeare's tragedies seem to be a favorite preserve of psychoanalytic critics and, therefore, a convenient place to peer at the three basic kinds of psychoanalytic criticism. Alas, there is a fourth kind—you might call it the here-a-phallic-symbol-there-a-phallic-symbol school—which is the only one working or classroom Shakespeareans usually encounter. It erupts when a class comes across a remark like Othello's:

> Behold, I haue a weapon:
> A better neuer did it selfe sustaine
> Vpon a Soldiers Thigh.

Invariably, a student puts up his hand and says, "Professor Weltschmerz, isn't that a phallic symbol?" and faces light up, mental sirens sound, and the class goes "Oo-o-o-h," as though something very profound had been said. Actually, nothing very profound has been said because the student has abandoned the basic procedure of psychoanalytic criticism.

Any statement in psychoanalytic criticism involves two steps. First, the critic must establish a congruity between something in the work of literature and some general psychoanalytic proposition. Second, the critic must relate the psychoanalytic proposition about the mind in general to some mind in particular. It is this second step that our phallicly-minded student, like most critics, forgot. Psychoanalysis, like any psychology, deals not with literature as such, but with minds, and there is absolutely no justification for bringing psychoanalysis into literary criticism at all except to relate the work of literature to somebody's mind. In the case of a tragedy, there are three minds handy: the author's, a character's, and the audience's, and these three minds lead in turn to the three basic methods of psychoanalytic criticism (that is, work-

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ing psychoanalytic criticism, not the psychoanalytic metacriticism of, say, Lionel Trilling which is another matter entirely).

The most obvious mind to which the psychoanalytic critic turns is the author's. Freud's essay, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908) supplies the theoretical link, the comparison of literary creations to daydreams (and for that matter to night dreams), all of them being projections of the fulfillment of wishes. If, in a dream, one character emerges as the "central character," such a character would represent the dreamer himself. So, Freud said, in a work of literature: where one character seems to stand out, that character must represent the poet himself. Thus, the two Shakespearean tragedies which most psychoanalytic critics have singled out as expressions of Shakespeare himself are *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus. Hamlet,* they say, shows the death of John Shakespeare in 1601 reactivating the poet's childhood attitudes toward his father, and *Coriolanus* is supposed to show the death of Mary Shakespeare in 1608 reactivating the poet's childhood feelings toward his mother.

According to psychoanalytic theory, the death of a loved one produces a period in which the bereaved person gradually accustoms himself to the idea that the deceased now lives on only in his own mind. A deceased parent becomes, as it were, incorporated into the mind of his surviving child, often as an accusing voice reminding the child of all the ways in which he has wronged or failed the dead parent. Thus, both *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus* are tragedies in which the hero (the poet) is made to suffer. In both tragedies, the heroes fail to live up to the demands their parent makes of them. And in both tragedies the hero identifies with or incorporates the parent in question. Coriolanus seems to identify with his mother in such passages as:

> My throat of Warre be turn'd,
> Which quier'd with my Drumme into a Pipe,
> Small as an Eunuch, or the Virgin voyce
> That Babies lull a-sleepe.

Hamlet inscribes his father's command on the tables of his memory, a singularly apt and graphic image for the incorporating process the theory posits.

But there are problems. First of all, the date of *Hamlet* is not

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nearly so clear as the psychoanalytic critics would have us believe; in fact, *Hamlet* was probably written before the death of John Shakespeare rather than after, and about the date of *Coriolanus,* the less said the better. Second, anything we say about Shakespeare's life properly belongs to biography, not literary criticism. Finally, and most important, there is no possibility of verifying these ingenious deductions about Shakespeare's emotional life. Entertaining as they may be, even, as Leon Edel suggests, helpful to the critic, they will always remain mere speculations.

By far the greatest part of psychoanalytic criticism of Shakespearean tragedy relates the play to the second mind available, the mind of one or another of the characters. The classic example, of course, is Freud's "brainstorm" (as one orthodox Shakespearean has called it) that Hamlet delays because he has Oedipal feelings about his father. Freud argued that Hamlet could not punish Claudius for getting rid of his father and marrying his mother because that is exactly what Hamlet wanted to do as a child and, in his unconscious, still wants to do. To punish Claudius would be to punish himself. In another famous psychoanalytic reading, Freud compared Lady Macbeth to a patient who had a compulsion to wash her hands all the time. In both cases, he said, the washing is a symbolic attempt to restore a moral cleanliness which the patient—or character—thinks she has lost. In *King Lear,* Freud (and others) have suggested that the real reason Lear goes mad is that he cannot admit to himself that there is a sexual tinge in his feelings toward his daughters. Other critics have argued that Iago wreaks his terrible revenge because, unconsciously, he is himself in love with Othello and jealous of Desdemona. And so on. One could add examples almost indefinitely, some by Freud, some by other analysts, some sane and some zany.

In all of them, however, the psychoanalytic critic treats the character as a living human being and all these readings, therefore, present the same theoretical problem. After all, a literary character is really only a tissue of words. To what extent are we entitled to assume that this conglomeration of syllables has a past and a future, a Freudian childhood that reaches back before the opening of the play? Ernest Jones, in the introduction to his *Hamlet and Oedipus,* discusses this problem and decides that it is all right for the psychoanalyst to treat Hamlet as living human being, be-

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cause this is what the literary critics themselves do. And recently, Professor Louis Fraiberg has argued that literary critics should treat Hamlet as a living person because the psychoanalysts do.

This critical do-se-do is not final, of course. There is still the third of the three minds to which psychoanalytic critics have referred Shakespearean tragedy, the mind of the audience or at least some average member of it, maybe even the critic himself. To this mind (as to the author's) the *whole* play appears as a total configuration or *gestalt,* not as just a single character. The first two psychoanalytic approaches represent the "older" view, the third, the "newer" view. My description of these approaches as "older" and "newer" is, however, a gross oversimplification. You can find the so-called newer view in some of the earliest psychoanalytic criticism, and the older view goes about yet like the snake scotched but not killed. The theoretical justification for the newer view, considering the whole play in relation to the audience's mind, occurs in the same essay, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," that gives rise to the biographical approach. Freud suggested that it was only in crude literature that a single character gratifies a simple wish of the author. In more sophisticated writings, he said, the author gets split up among several characters, and he made several analyses of audience reaction on this basis in his much-neglected essay, "The 'Uncanny.' "

Basically, then, in calling these views "older" and "newer," I am trying to prejudice you in favor of the one I prefer. Nevertheless, there is some basis for the distinction. The so-called "newer" approach relates both to newer developments in psychoanalytic theory and to newer views of Shakespeare. Freud discovered first the unconscious and its freight of rather sordid wishes. In the twenties, however, psychoanalysis became increasingly concerned, not so much with the unconscious, as with the various strategies the mind uses to direct unconscious wishes into acceptable channels. This approach to the mind leads quite naturally to considering a work of literature, not as a single unconscious wish, but as a totality or *gestalt* of competing unconscious wishes, the showplace of an interior drama in the minds of the playwright or his audience. Similarly, this so-called "newer" psychoanalytic criticism follows on the anti-realistic, anti-biographical trends in Shakespearean criticism. Looking through a Shakespearean tragedy to

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the author's biography is a nineteenth-century pastime. Looking at the characters as real people or staging Shakespeare with real rabbits hopping about on real grass, these are nineteenth-century approaches to realism. In our own sublimely enlightened century, we tend to play down Shakespeare's realism and consider instead the formal interrelations between the various parts of the play, the wholeness of it, and this is what the "newer" kind of psychoanalytic criticism has also begun to do.

It is no surprise, then, that this newer or motivational researcher's approach first turns up in relation to those aspects of Shakespearean tragedy that are least realistic, the ghosts, for example, in *Julius Caesar, Macbeth,* and *Hamlet.* These ghosts, Otto Rank early decided,[1] are all associated with father-figures (Banquo being a surrogate for Duncan). The ghosts represent a dual wish. Most obviously, they are the quite literal fulfillment of a wish to see the father dead, but they also represent the "immortality," the persistence of one's childhood feelings toward the father. Thus, they represent a second wish, that these infantile attitudes were as questionable as a ghost and could be laid to rest like a ghost.

Another point of nonrealism which lent itself to this newer psychoanalytic approach was the old chestnut planted by Rymer and Coleridge: Is Iago realistic or not? The answer the newer approach gives[2] is that Iago is neither real nor unreal, but the projection of doubting impulses. That is, Othello represents to the unconscious of the audience an impulse toward idealizing, toward absolute purity, uncontaminated by any cynicism; Iago represents an impulse of absolute disillusionment, uncontaminated by any idealism.

In other tragedies besides *Othello,* the characters are regarded as projections of different unconscious feelings. For example, in *Julius Caesar,* there is a single father, Caesar himself, but there are three "sons." Brutus is a son who embodies both love and hatred toward the father. Cassius embodies only hatred, and he also projects in his repeated talk about suicide the self-punishing impulse of a "bad" son. Antony embodies only love for the father and the

[1] *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Sage,* 2d. ed. (Leipzig, 1926), K. VI. One of the finest of psychoanalytic literary studies, this work has not yet been translated into English.

[2] Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934; Vintage ed., 1958), Ch. V. J. I. M. Stewart [Michael Innes], *Character and Motive in Shakespeare* (London, 1949), Ch. V.

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desire to vindicate and identify with the father. Similarly, *Hamlet* can be taken as a configuration of different attitudes toward the father. There are five father-figures: the ghost is the idealized father; Polonius the doting father; Claudius the criminal father; old Fortinbras the murdered father; Fortinbras's uncle, the sick, impotent father. Similarly, Laertes and Hamlet represent different aspects of the son. Laertes is the dutiful son, eager to revenge his father's murder, but he is subordinate to Hamlet who represents the son as a rival of the father.

In *Macbeth,* Freud himself pointed out, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are like two halves of a dissociated personality: after the murder of Duncan he becomes defiant, she remorseful; together they exhaust the possibilities of response. Ludwig Jekels analyzed the role of Macduff as a counterpart of Macbeth.[3] That is, Macbeth is a bad son murdering the king-father. Macduff also defies, rebels against, and ultimately kills the king-father, but in his case it's all right.

Even these "new" psychoanalytic critics, however, as these examples suggest, tend to talk mostly about plot and character and rather less about the language. Very recently, however, one psychoanalyst, Dr. Robert Fliess,[4] has tried to deal with the texture of Shakespeare's verse. He suggests that Shakespeare's images keep the mind of the audience in a constant state of change, fluctuating, as it were, up and down the levels of the unconscious from the earliest stages of childhood to the latest. For example, Fliess contributes a novel approach to the textual crux as to whether that flesh of Hamlet's that might melt is "solid," "sullied," or "sallied." In any case, Fliess argues, the image of melting flesh suggests the relaxation and flow upon the satisfaction of the rigid tension of a man's sexuality. The "self-slaughter" 'gainst which the Everlasting has fixed his canon disguises a sexual "self-abuse" outlawed by the Everlasting, be he God or father. The image contributes its mite to the totality of a play which deals with the complex relation of father and son.

Nevertheless, as even this brief summary must suggest, what I am calling the newer psychoanalytic approach is not yet fully

[3] Ludwig Jekels, "The Riddle of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*" (1916), "The Problem of the Duplicated Expression of Psychic Themes" (1932), in *Selected Papers* (New York, 1952).

[4] In a book with (for literary critics) the unlikely title, *Erogeneity and Libido* (New York, 1957) *passim* and p. 198.

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developed. It does indeed deal with a Shakespearean tragedy as a totality, a configuration or *gestalt* of plot and characters, but it tends to neglect the poetry. Further, the psychoanalytic critic, even one studying the play as a totality, does not always make it clear that he is considering it in relation to the mind of the audience. Like our student with the phallus on his mind, he too often contents himself simply with saying that something going on in the tragedy is like something psychoanalysts experience in practice. He often fails to go on to draw a conclusion about some particular mind; he sometimes reverts to an earlier approach and refers the total configuration of the play to the author's mind or a character's.

Even though this newer approach is not yet applied fully to Shakespeare, it does emerge very sharply and clearly in one area of psychoanalytic criticism—the popular arts, myth, folktale, movies, television, and the like, where no single author clearly appears. We can expect this third approach in Shakespearean criticism if for no other reason than that Shakespeare was once—in some quarters still is—a popular artist. The line between *Romeo and Juliet* and *I Married a Teen-Age Necrophiliac* is not as sharp as some middlebrows would have it.

As for the three methods of psychoanalytic criticism, there is no particularly sharp line between the first or peeping Tom approach (referring the work to the author's mind) and the third (referring it to the audience's mind); in psychoanalytic theory, the audience's response to a work of art recapitulates *mutatis mutandis* the author's act of creation. The sharp line runs between, on the one hand, those two methods which consider the work as a totality and, on the other, the psychoanalytic approach which considers only a part of the work, the mind of a single character. In treating a literary character as a human being the critic assumes that an author finds or invents a reality and then copies it in his work of art (perhaps the most famous critics of this school were the burghers of Rembrandt's *Night Watch*). In treating the work as an indivisible whole the critic assumes that the work of art is to be itself savored as a final reality, not as a filtered version of something else. In psychological terms, the critic who looks at a single character in isolation assumes that a literary work portrays the stimuli and responses of some fictitious people; the critic who

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looks at the work as a total configuration considers it as itself the stimulus to the very real responses of very real people—the audience. In other words, we have come to an old crux in Shakespearean criticism, the case of A. C. Bradley vs. G. Wilson Knight, two different conceptions of what the bard is doing. Is Shakespeare writing Galsworthian naturalism or verse drama? Is he writing realistic plays about realistic people or is he dealing in the demonic wisdom of folktale?

This difference about the author carries over into the question of what the audience is doing, what kind of covenant, what gesture of "as if," we make when we are watching a play. Dr. Johnson held that we credit a drama "with all the credit due to a drama," that is, we recognize that it is a fiction but credit it as "a just picture of a real original." Coleridge held that "we pass no judgment either way," but rather make "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." The real division in the psychoanalytic approaches, then, is: when we see a Shakespearan tragedy, do we agree to believe or do we simply agree not to disbelieve?

The notion that we pretend that plays (or any work of art) are real will fit the naturalistic theater and fiction of the late nineteenth century and after well enough; but it will not accommodate a whole host of other genres that the suspension-of-disbelief approach will: myth, folktale, lyric poetry, morality plays, allegory, surrealist and abstract painting, music, and so on. Also, the suspension-of-disbelief approach corresponds to the general psychoanalytic description of the way art seduces its audience: because the ego-function of reality-testing is, as it were, bought off by artistic convention, our unconscious responses are free to come through. The more we consciously tell ourselves, "This is not reality, but a play," the more the ego suspends its function of belief or disbelief, and the more we are free to respond unconsciously. The only basis for applying the psychoanalytic description of the mind, not to the real mind of the audience, but to the fictional minds of the characters, is the old Aristotelian one of probability. In effect, when Freud or Jones says that Hamlet cannot kill Claudius because of his Oedipal feelings, they are saying that Hamlet's delay is probable, lifelike, or human under the circum-

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stances. Yet, probability in Aristotle's sense simply begs the question. It is not at all clear whether by "probability" Aristotle—or we—mean what is human or lifelike under the circumstances or what is probable or necessary in terms of the internal logic, the *mythos,* of the tragedy as a whole.

Perhaps most important, the psychoanalytic study of a literary character must end with simply that. The newer psychoanalytic approach, considering the play as a whole with respect to the audience's mind, is, in that grimmest of social scientists' terms, heuristic. It puts us in a position to go on and answer some of the fundamental questions about tragedy in general and Shakespearean tragedy in particular. The basic assumption of psychoanalysis in general is: there are certain patterns in infantile fantasies and drives which we modify in growing up, yet these infantile patterns persist unmodified in the unconscious mind of the adult, and from them he derives his emotional or "gut" reaction to things. We find underneath the shaped and ordered surface of works of art these same infantile patterns. Therefore, says this newer psychoanalytic approach to art, we must understand the emotional response of an adult audience to a Shakespearean tragedy—or any work of literature—in terms of these more or less concealed infantile patterns.

Given this set of hypotheses, we can answer such basic questions about tragedy as the one Aristotle asked: How is it that the dramatist makes the unpleasant catastrophes of tragedy into a source of pleasure for the audience? The answer, in psychoanalytic terms, is that the dramatist dredges up the terrors and chaos of childhood to impose on them the order of art and the resolution of the tragic ending. In other words, catharsis, in a psychoanalytic sense, means mastering both the fears from childhood and the adult's pity for the individual (himself) suffering those fears. This pity and fear is re-ordered and re-understood into the coherence of art. More specifically, a tragedy acts out two wishes: the first is the child's wish to rebel against the authority of his parents (which the tragedy projects as fate, God, or the social order). The second wish is the ayenbite of inwit, the wish to be punished for this rebellion. Thus, the audience at a tragedy feels fear for its own audacity in rebelling and pity for its own suffering for that rebellion. In the last act of a Shakespearean tragedy—as opposed to a modern tragedy—

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these inconsistent demands, to rebel and to be punished for it, are re-integrated into a moral order, albeit somewhat bruised, which the tragic ending re-establishes.

Thus, this newer psychoanalytic approach suggests what is unique in Shakespearean tragedy, what makes it different from, say, Greek tragedy, or French, or modern. One special attribute of Shakespearean tragedy is the use of plot parallels. As Ludwig Jekels suggested, the extra plots give us other versions of the wish which the tragic hero projects. For example, in *Macbeth,* the hero wishes to replace the king-father; in fact, he does, and that causes all the trouble. Macduff also defies, rebels against, and ultimately kills the king-father, but in his case we feel that it is all right because he is getting rid of a tyrant. In other words, Jekels says, the actions of the secondary hero give us another form of the major tragic wish of *Macbeth,* a form in which it is toned down, made socially acceptable. The parallel gives us, in effect, a more grown-up form of the wish projected by the main plot. Similarly, as Robert Fliess suggests, Shakespeare's verse with its vast deluge of images and metaphors keeps the unconscious of the audience in a constant state of ferment. In every word and every line, the poetry ranges through all kinds of unconscious patterns, dredging them up so the tragedy can order them into coherence. In short, psychoanalysis finds the special elements in Shakespearean tragedy its range and depth, the complexity with which it develops and handles different levels of unconscious fantasies and wishes in a single play. The "new psychoanalytic criticism" thus leads into the bases of aesthetic value, though people often say (quite erroneously) questions of value are beyond the scope of psychoanalysis.

This newer psychological approach can also tell us something about the characters, specifically, the tragic hero. Aristotle said the tragic hero should be a man neither wholly good nor wholly bad. In a psychoanalytic sense, the tragic hero is a projection or representation of a wish which (presumably) all the members of the audience feel to a greater or lesser extent. In the case of Lear, the hero acts out a childish longing to be everything. Coriolanus tries the hopeless task of winning the love of a cold, demanding mother by doing high deeds. Hamlet longs to rise above a world which he finds diseased and distasteful. Instead of a man who is neither wholly good nor wholly bad, the psychoanalytic view

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presents us with a *wish* which can be either good or bad. For example, Macbeth projects a wish to replace the king-father, a bad wish. Othello, however, projects a wish for complete possession of complete and wonderful purity, surely a good wish. But in all these cases the wish is a *partial* wish—and this is the psychoanalytic form of the ambiguity Aristotle noted—the wish is only half the story; it is a wish uncorrected by conscience or any sense of reality. Contrast the case of comedy. The comic hero often projects the same kind of wish as a tragic hero, one which may be either good or bad, but is uncorrected by a sense of reality. In comedy the social or cosmic order, the rest of the play in other words, bends to grant this wish; in tragedy, the rest of the play rather cruelly teaches the hero his folly.

From such answers to basic issues of tragedy, the pleasure in pain, the nature of the tragic hero, the special quality of Shakespearean tragedy, it should be clear that psychoanalytic criticism need not be the narrow, jargon-ridden technic it so often is. Psychoanalysis offers a rich, dynamic approach to all aspects of literature from the minutiae of particular words to the grand hermetic mysteries of literary value—but only if the critic recognizes two things. He must refer his findings to some mind, and of the three minds available, the one to use is not necessarily the best or most nimble but the most real, the one most certainly there: the audience's, in the last analysis, his own.

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ANNE SEXTON

Letter Written During a January Northeaster

Monday

Dearest,
It is snowing, grotesquely snowing
upon the small faces of the dead.
Those dear loudmouths, gone for over a year,
buried side by side
like little wrens.
But why should I complain?
The dead turn over casually,
thinking:
Good! No visitors today.
My window, which is not a grave,
is dark with my fierce concentration
and too much snowing
and too much silence.
The snow has quietness in it; no songs,
no smells, no shouts nor traffic.
When I speak
my own voice shocks me.

Tuesday

I have invented a lie,
There is no other day but Monday.
It seems reasonable to pretend
that I could change the day
like a pair of socks.
To tell the truth
days are all the same size
and words aren't much company.
If I were sick, I'd be a child,
tucked in under the woollens, sipping my broth.
As it is,

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the days are not worth grabbing
or lying about.

Monday

It would be pleasant to be drunk:
faithless to my tongue and hands,
giving up the boundaries
for the heroic gin.
Dead drunk
is the term I think of,
insensible,
neither cool nor warm,
without a head or a foot.
To be drunk is to be intimate with a fool.
I will try it shortly.

Monday

Just yesterday,
twenty eight men aboard a damaged radar tower
foundered down seventy miles off the coast.
Immediately their hearts slammed shut.
The storm would not cough them up.
Today they are whispering over Sonar.
Small voice,
what do you say?
Aside from the going down, the awful wrench,
the pulleys and hooks and the black tongue . . .
What are your headquarters?
Are they kind?

Monday

It must be Friday by now.
I admit I have been lying.
Days don't freeze
and to say that the snow has quietness in it
is to ignore the possibilities of the word.
Only the tree has quietness in it;
quiet as a pair of antlers
waiting on the cabin wall,

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quiet as the crucifix,
pounded out years ago like a handmade shoe.
Someone once
told an elephant to stand still.
That's why trees remain quiet all winter.
They're not going anywhere.

Monday

Dearest,
where are your letters?
The mailman is an impostor.
He is actually my grandfather.
He floats far off in the storm
with his nicotine mustache and a bagful of nickels.
His legs stumble through
baskets of eyelashes.
Like all the dead
he picks up his disguise,
shakes it off and slowly pulls down the shade,
fading out like an old movie.
Now he is gone
as you are gone.
But he belongs to me like lost baggage.

Doors, Doors, Doors

1. Old Man

Old man, it's four flights up and for what?
Your room is hardly any bigger than your bed.
Puffing as you climb, you are a brown woodcut
stooped over the thin rail and the wornout tread.

The room will do. All that's left of the old life
is jampacked on shelves from floor to ceiling
like a supermarket: your books, your dead wife
generously fat in her polished frame, the congealing

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bowl of cornflakes sagging in their instant milk,
your hot plate and your one luxury, a telephone.
You leave your door open, lounging in maroon silk
and smiling at the other roomers who live alone.
Well, almost alone. Through the old fashioned wall
the fellow next door has a girl who comes to call.

Twice a week at noon during their lunch hour
they pause by your door to peer into your world.
They speak sadly as if the wine they carry would sour
or as if the mattress would not keep them curled

together, extravagantly young in their tight lock.
Old man, you are their father holding court
in the dingy hall until their alarm clock
rings and unwinds them. You unstopper the quart

of brandy you've saved, examining the small print
in the telephone book. The phone in your lap is all
that's left of your family name. Like a Romanoff prince
you stay the same in your small alcove off the hall.
Castaway, your time is a flat sea that doesn't stop,
with no new land to make for and no new stories to swap.

2. Seamstress

I'm at pains to know what else I could have done
but move out of his parish, him being my son;

him being the only one at home since his Pa
left us to beat the Japs at Okinawa.

I put the gold star up in the front window
beside the flag. Alterations is what I know

and what I did: hems, gussets and seams.
When my boy had the fever and the bad dreams

I paid for the clinic exam and a pack of lies.
As a youngster his private parts were undersize.

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I thought of his Pa, that muscley old laugh he had
and the boy was thin as a moth, but never once bad,

as smart as a rooster! To hear some neighbors tell,
Your kid! He'll go far. He'll marry well.

So when he talked of taking the cloth, I thought
I'd talk him out of it. You're all I got,

I told him. For six years he studied up. I prayed
against God himself for my boy. But he stayed.

Christ was a hornet inside his head. I guess
I'd better stitch the zipper in this dress.

I guess I'll get along. I always did.
Across the hall from me's an old invalid,

aside of him, a young one—he carries on
with a girl who pretends she comes to use the john.

The old one with bad breath and his bed all mussed,
he smiles and talks to them. He's got some crust.

Sure as hell, what else could I have done
but pack up and move in here, him being my son.

3. Young Girl

Dear love, as simple as some distant evil,
we walk a little drunk up these three flights
where you tacked a Dufy print above your army cot.

The thin apartment doors on the way up will
not tell on us. We are saying we have *our* rights
and let them see the sandwiches and wine we bought

for we do not explain my husband's insane abuse
and we do not say why your wild haired wife has fled
or that my father opened like a walnut and then was dead.
Your palms fold over me like knees. Love is the only use.

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Both a little drunk in the middle afternoon,
with the forgotten smart of August on our skin
we hold hands as if we still were children who trudge

up the wooden tower, on up past that close platoon
of doors, past the dear old man who always asks us in
and the one who sews like a wasp and will not budge.

Climbing the dark halls, I ignore their papers and pails,
the twelve coats of rubbish of someone else's dim life.
Tell them need is an excuse for love. Tell them need prevails.
Tell them I remake and smooth your bed and am your wife.

The Hangman

Reasonable, reasonable, reasonable . . . we walked through
ten different homes, they always call them homes,
to find one ward where they like the babies who
look like you. Each time, the eyes that no one owns
watched us silently, these visitors from the street
that moves outside. They watched, but did not know
about time, there in the house where babies never grow.
My boy, though innocent and mild
your brain is obsolete.
Those six times that you almost died
the newest medicine and the family fuss
pulled you back again. Supplied
with air, against my guilty wish,
your clogged pipes cried
like Lazarus.

At first your mother said . . . why me! why me!
But she got over that. Now she enjoys
her dull daily care and her hectic bravery.
You do not love anyone. She is not growing a boy;
she is enlarging a stone to wear around her neck.

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Some nights in our bed her mouth snores at me coldly
or when she turns, her kisses walking out of the sea,
I think of the bad stories,
the monster and the wreck.
I think of that Scandinavian tale
that tells of the king who killed nine
sons in turn. Slaughtered wholesale,
they had one life in common
as you have mine
my son.

Love Song for K. Owyne

When I lay down for death
my love came down to Craigy's Sea
and fished me from the snakes.
He let me use his breath.
He pushed away the mud and lay with me.
And lay with me in sin.

I washed lobster and stale gin
off your shirt. We lived in sin
in too many rooms. Now you live in Ohio
among the hard fields of potatoes,
the gray sticks and the bad breath
of the coal mines. Oh Love, you know
how the waves came running up the stairs
for me, just as the nervous trees
in Birnam wood crept up upon Macbeth
to catch his charmed head turning and well aware.
I was not safe. I heard the army in the sea
move in, again and again, against me.

Shuffled between caring and disgrace
I took up all our closet space.
What luxury we first checked into,
to growl like lawyers until I threw

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my diamonds and cash upon the floor.
You'd come for death. I couldn't suit you
until the sun came up as mild as a pear
and the room, having hurt us, was ours.
You sang me a song about bones, dinosaur
bones. Though I was bony you found me fair.
In the bay, the imported swans drank for hours
like pale acrobats or gently drunken flowers.

DONALD HALL

An American in an Essex Village

He walks out of the village. The road
  lowers into a hollow
    which villagers call
  the Borough, though it contains
only a farm, a stream where small boys
      go newting,

and four mediaeval town houses
  which drop plaster in the frosts
    of winter, and which
  a decade will dismantle.
Their second storeys jut like the brows
      of children.

The road climbs, and he looks back across
  the Borough at the long Church
    like a cathedral
  with its weathered carved stone
over the planes of the red-tiled roofs.
      Dominant,

the spire pierces seven times the height
  of the beech tree. The village

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gathered by the spire
pointed toward a destiny
which ordained the narrow proportions
which please him.

Yet inside the Church, he remembers,
the death-watch beetle hollows
six-hundred-year-old
beams. The Vicar reconstructs
old music and Roman liturgy
for twelve souls.

He wanders South of the Church, and sees
the derelict mill which heaves
among the barley
of a high field and raises
nude vanes which the industrious wind
cannot turn.

He walks toward it, on lanes through barley.
Its pitted red brick is dark
against the green hills
opening past the village.
In a century of poor gleanings
it crushed wheat

for everyone's dark loaf. Its wide cone
taught the proportions of use.
Its ruin appals
only an eye which invents
a landscape which needs it. It is there
to be climbed.

In the complicated village street
to which he descends, a truck
delivers milled flour
to the baker in his shop.
The curved street is a continuous
delicate

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pargetting, and beyond the resumed
almoners' house, gas pumps lean
from the imagined
plaster and timber. He hears
the Vicar teaching his old cello
to the son

of the Tory grocer in the room
at the back of the grocer's
under the low oak
beams with the ship's markings on them,
which ten years of winter without heat
would crumble.

He goes home and makes tea at a stove
in a house which will vanish.
If he spills water
from kettle onto cokestove
it hurtles together from all sides
at once.

R. G. VLIET

And a Cove Salt Swim

would taste of gull-cracked mussels
the crabshell rifted by crab disease
the boy who furtively took relief
at sand's edge, terns' excretions
the ironworks' sewerage. If we come down
to the shore before the moon is bright
we'll hear the lovers churning
in the sand like many darkened
seabeasts; watch where you step

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or you step on antennae-hands shaking
above the sand, sea-tortured anemone.

Sweet is the night air. Listen
to the clam creature suck and tide
ticked pulses, waves that push
their condoms to the beach. These thrive
by the rich sea by the rich
ironworks. Morning and they're gone
on tides or clockings-in, leaving
great sand scrawls like words
and picking among the jellied condoms, birds.

The Sun in One Last High Time

today wrenches the trees, streaks
the air with blue, with slowfires there.
Barbed fences of plumpowdered
blackberry hedge the year
and up in fields late hunters' blasts
clock the heart of the cock, weed
runner whose cawk! whose hot
blood jerks the winter seeds;
the world turns on its brittle stalk.

And that pale Lady shall ride down
from her hill tonight, white-lipped,
through blackened thistle and new blown
snow; the hurt cock shall tighten
beneath her breath o a frost is in her wrists
her hair is a twist of cold-cracked straw
and dry gourds rattle at her breasts
and that stud her black steed
is nervous, nervous, and thick with seed.

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MARTIN HALPERN

The Osprey

Maine honeymooners, we moored our skiff at midday
On a mile-round, fern-forested island all
Silence and greenness, as if unlived-on ever,
Unowned, and for all we might care to pretend, undiscovered.
So, like the giants we felt in our large love's pride,
Trampling the fern like some fabulous primal woodland,
We mounted the easy slope to its summit, and there
Assumed dominion over our estate.
And lordly all ways round the view we commanded
Commanded fertile ground and lake-smooth ocean,
Clean air and the sun's temperate fire.

Only,
A strident cry now grating against the silence
Focussed one ledge we had overlooked while mounting,
And sudden there, the giant osprey's nest
And the giant osprey rising straight for our sun.
Then, minded how mother hawks in fear for their nestlings
Can claw the faces of strangers, we clutched as stones
What had looked in the fern like boulders, and wished them
larger.
High overhead, white underwings beating her mass
Into balance, as over sea-prey she poised, casting shade
The shape of those wings and fear the shape of her fear;
Till, with a second cry and the possible feint
Of a dive, she banked off leftward and down, veered back,
And set bent, watching beak and unsheathed claws
In orbit round and around the exposed sun's disc,
Not twenty-five feet from our eyes.

Round and around then
She traced that precise and dizzying ellipse,
Each full turn toward us reminded to cry that cry,

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Which seemed now threat, now threnody, and touched
No less than it terrified depths of our baffled good will.
And oh how we craved some language to parley motives:
How might she teach us what gesture could put her at peace;
Or we teach her how we knew all about her nestlings,
But how there was room on this island for more than one
Large love? Or did we? Was there? What, on earth,
Not twenty-five feet from that untranslatable circling
And cry, could we begin to know of what
It is to be a bird, and in distress?

So an hour and more we suffered her suffering helpless
To help; till giddiness, aching napes, and a sun
Grown hotter than Maine suns should, strained
misunderstanding
To critical enmity between us and the osprey;
Till only the dread of missing, or worse, just wounding,
Stayed us from flinging our stones in the teeth of that monstrous
Unreason, monstrously pure and exclusive love.

Then all we could do was rise, heads bent as in sign
Of our pride's abasement yet one eye fixed on the bird,
Arms loose as in proof of our peaceful intent yet a stone
Concealed in each fist, and baby-step backwards away
From the place of her nest toward the steeper and rougher
descent
To the far side of the island. Ringed by the shadow
Of her now silent circling, we reached the rim,
Turned, dropped one stone apiece, and hand in hand,
Twice tripping on clusters of fern, went headlong within
That shadow, down and around the jagged-rocked beach
To our banishment. Over the skiff as we unmoored it,
Still silent, still too close and beyond us for comfort,
Claws, beak, and whiteness glistened round and around;
And not till we'd rowed ten lengths from the shore did she once
More poise, then crying one last and longest cry
Of a sense obscure as the source of her passion, break
From that orbit, show us her soaring black back, and excuse us.

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JAMES MERRILL

Annie Hill's Grave

Amen. The casket like a spaceship bears her
In streamlined, airtight comfort underground.
Necropolis is a nice place to visit;
One would not want to live there all year round.

So think the children of its dead, emerging
From shadow by the small deep gates of clay,
Exclaiming softly, joyful if bewildered,
To see each other rouged, hair silver gray.

Some have not met, though constant to the City,
For decades. Now their slowly sunnier
Counterclockwise movement, linked and loving,
Slackens the whirlpool that has swallowed her.

Alone, she grips, against confusion, pictures
Of us the living and of the tall youth
She wed but has not seen for thirty summers.
Used to the dark, he lies in the next booth,

Part of that whole poor overpopulated
Land of our dreams, that 'instant' space
—To have again, just add stars, wind, and water—
Shrinkingly broached. And as the brief snail-trace

Of her withdrawal dries upon our faces
The silence drums into her upturned face.

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WINTHROP PALMER

Our United States

A billow of skirt
The postmistress
Receives the ends of the earth.

With toothy gleam, the twentieth century appliance
Grimace of Main Street, desperate clown,
Evacuates a porcelain intestine into Jersey Meadows.
What passive bodies wheel into line. Cars,
Trucks, trailers. As at the abattoir
Steer, hogs, sheep.

Into the face of glass,
My city lady,
The tulip in a white mask
Flies a thousand jonquils.

Over the ooze of automobile
Under the clack of hoofs,
With her red flowers
The street marks time.

On Sunday
Half-way from high-school to hardware shop,
Willie Policeman dries up the river.
Two old ladies cross safely,
Climb the stone ladder,
Are admitted into the ark.

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BENJAMIN DE MOTT

How to Write a College Novel

(Memo from an Academic Grove to a Sensible Senior Editor. Written after a weekend with the college fiction of Mary McCarthy, Stringfellow Barr, Carlos Baker, John Aldridge, May Sarton, Randall Jarrell, and others.)

Choice of Author:

Stay away from insiders: they are too killingly predictable. A man in course of an honorable and successful career as a teacher produces books in which the campus is swathed in Quiet Cultivation and Sunny Selflessness and populated only by stereotypes—the Good Dean, the Evil Trustee, the Wise Chairman—most of whom were invented by college catalogues. (A defensive ploy, obviously.) When the writer is an academic gipsy—a character who lacks the credentials or ingenuity or stamina required for a lifetime university career, or who feels that (on those occasions when he was "in residence") colleagues and students treated him with less than the appropriate adulation—it offers either a metaphor of the College as a snakepit, or a mean, nose-picking little drama that rests on incredibly simple assumptions, as for example that the only dirty diapers and undefrosted refrigerators in America are the property of assistant professors of Slavic languages with lazy but fertile wives. You can best avoid these clichés by retaining an outsider. Find some brainy chap whose attitude toward his own formal education is that the latter is merely something that happened to him as a boy; buy him a room in a campus inn for three months (rates are low except on Football and Commencement weekends), and leave him alone to smoke in and smoke out The Truth. Not a word of it has ever been put in a book, to judge from recent samples.

Notes on Tone:

Behold the professor, the fresh hope of the age: should you encourage the writer you hire to treat him as a New Man? At first glance, yes. After decades of abuse—first for not meeting

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payrolls, then for meeting Reds—the professor is coming into his own. Nobody but speaks well of him in public. Nobody but wants more of him by the tens of thousand. Nobody in the corporations (show us how to test our young men), or in politics (give us some unconventional wisdom), or even in the churches (define for us the faith of the free-thinker) but pleads for the top of his mind. What is more, no one in the university itself is unaware that the slickest current pitch of the Fund Drive is: Alumni! fatten the profs. For these reasons you'd assume that the new professor would be all exhilaration and glow. The assumption, though, isn't worth a damn. Academic purses are heavier and the professor has learned more about the basic comforts, but exhilaration is still outside his gates. Partly this is because the academic thinks that the people who have lately taken it into their heads to admire him have no better grasp of his nature than those who in former days detested him. (A well-founded suspicion.) Partly it's because he's suffered too long from the habit of self-contempt. (If the writer you hire plans to attend public College lectures, tell him to keep a book on *introductions*. To this day one professor introducing another on a public occasion normally finishes a recital of the guests's accomplishments with the nervously jocular words, "And now, eschewing the word professor in favor of a more honorable title, I introduce to you *Mr.* X— Y—"!)

There's nothing mysterious about this habit, of course. For almost a century the professor figured as the most available target of every onslaught of American anti-intellectualism—and it would be foolish to claim that the abusers were all real estate operators and used car salesmen. The typical American writer or artist of this century felt obliged to assure the audience that he was a dumb fellow, a bad speller, a famous truant, a teacher-hater from early youth to his election to the American Academy. And the fervor and justice of his claim to stupidity, coupled with his reputation or achievement, have told impressively against the learned. The latter, whether they leave the groves or hang on, are riddled with scars. Those who clear out often spit over their shoulders at the Chapel tower as they depart. (The economist headed for Washington mutters about impractical, mathematics-maddened collegians; the literary journalist maunders about professor poets or novelists.) Teachers who remain often betray, through their on-campus be-

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havior, inadequate trust in the standards of their calling. They are easily victimized, for example, by students who, blessed with a trace of a talent, claim regard as persons too gifted to muck about with common assignments. Faced with such a claim teachers sometimes go so far as to agree that learning is the enemy of art: they encourage the talented boy in his fantasies, carry him piggy-back through the hateful turbulence of exam week and then, when the graduation ceremony is over, wait patiently and gratefully outside the Quad for the new A.B. to bestow them a scornful parting crack in the shins.[1]

It follows that if the novelist you hire is seeking to render contemporary fact, he must represent (somewhere) the ambiguities of the teacher's confidence in the standards and values he upholds. The public is, at the moment, swinging hastily from extreme to extreme in estimating the professor, but a new and thoroughly positive definition of the ideals of the profession will be required before the academic can share other people's confidence in himself. In short: avoid both beamishness and cynicism, and let the mixed nature of the present situation appear even in the final draft.

Suggestions for Character-Analysis I: Some Bearings of Vanity

An acceptable characterization of a teacher *cannot* be worked up casually: sweat the opposite idea out of the man you hire *before* you offer an advance. No novel of academe has ever produced a believable prof. The teacher's strengths—intelligence, relative freedom from greed—are (perhaps) obvious, but they do not exempt him from analysis any more than they qualify him for abuse. Where could such analysis begin? Possibly at the beginning —with some rendering of the unique circumstances of academic careers that affect the development of character. What are these circumstances?

[1] An amusing episode of this sort occurred recently at a small New England college. A gifted, angry, coddled young man was brought effortfully through final examinations by his department—it was considered "bad public relations" to harass an Artist with intelligent questions—and then awarded (by a group of teachers he had frequently characterized as pedants) a rich fellowship enabling him to travel abroad. When he returned, the same group of teachers arranged for a further financial contribution to his welfare, and successfully undertook to "place" him in a superior graduate school for which the character was in theory ineligible, though he signified his willingness to attend. Even at this point the people mentioned had not exhausted means for expressing their generosity. Offering them a chance to applaud their own destruction, the young recipient of their aid announced before leaving town that his next literary work would be a "murderous satire" upon them—and was roundly cheered.

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Consider: The professor-to-be is usually encouraged into his profession while an undergraduate. He is singled out from his fellows for heady praise at an extraordinarily early age (17 or 18 or 19), awarded in adolescence the right to believe in the quality of his mind and in the validity of his opinions. (Note, incidentally, that academic praise in America tends toward powerful adjectives like *brilliant, incisive* and *masterful,* rather than toward condescending epithets like *clever* that remain in vogue in England.) While it is probably true that not every young man in his late teens wishes to take himself with great seriousness, the young man who is instructed to do so rarely finds it difficult to obey. And this obedience is, for definable reasons, a Bad Thing. A boy of eighteen, however bright, cannot possibly have in mind—at the moment when his abilities are being celebrated—everything that it is useful for a person to have in mind at such a moment. He lacks the proportioning senses of life—the sense of contradiction for one. He does not know that charm can be mistaken for brilliance, grace of movement for distinction of mind; he doesn't know that men of acknowledged gifts on occasion do fail to make their way; he doesn't know that some men regarded as clods in youth discover in mid-life a vein of truth or energy in themselves that yields them a splendid accomplishment; he doesn't know that even people like himself will die and may suffer pain; he doesn't know that marriages go sour, or that for some splendid accomplishment there is no audience, or that many late-found pursuits are enjoyable enough to make a man long to give himself over to them in scorn of his Career—or any of a thousand other truths which, when experienced, function in paradoxical ways as checks on vanity. Praise of a youth can set flowing a current of confidence that will bear the man forward to great achievement. In which event vanity ripens into wisdom and humor, and everyone has gained—including the novelist, who can build a golden character out of such a movement.

But only one such movement in *this* novel, please. The rule of life, after all, is that most men (even professors) can boast merely of middling achievement, can accomplish enough to establish that their first enthusiasts were correct in seeing lights of intelligence, but not enough to justify the voices that claimed to see genius.

When such men possess self-knowledge, their "failure" as gen-

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iuses can cause them to lapse into bitter negativism. (It is easy to flourish as a "brilliant boy" among ordinary boys, less easy to flourish as an aging "brilliant boy" in a society of former brilliant boys, a small minority of whom are becoming brilliant men.) When such men do not possess self-knowledge, they often seem not merely vain but oblivious, remote, completely off the pad. Perfectly all right to represent such a figure: but indecent not to seek understanding of him. In American fiction no one has ever tried; in English fiction there are some helpful hints—see George Eliot's Casaubon or even Virginia Woolf's Professor Ramsay. Neither figure is admirable, but both *are* fully seen. Tell your man to try to see fully: his goal is *not* to write a College Confidential.

Suggestions for Character-Analysis II: Some Bearings of Social Position

A feature of the professorial nature closely related to vanity is the disposition toward *climbing*. Here again there are nice complications. The old English saw that maintains that whenever a professor enters an elegant company the social tone is instantly lowered is inapplicable in America, where little elegant company exists. And the charge that the average American professor in a good institution is a bright lower middle class person who is using the university as a ladder to carry him to some better social destiny has not been richly documented. But it is true that two significant academic social classes in this country have ticks of manner that recall versions of the nineteenth century climber. The first class is composed of intelligent men of private means who, rendered ineligible for the usual American career, must seek honor instead of money. The second is composed of men who, whatever their original status, regard themselves as "rising in the world." The man of means is marked by a curious air of embarrassment, a tendency toward careful self-effacement and reticence; he seems bent on assuring men of lesser advantage that he is ashamed of the superiority of his manners and tastes. The hustler is marked, on the other hand, by a tendency toward extreme volubility at faculty meetings, and by an eagerness to shock—symptoms of an uncontrolled need for recognition.

So much is simple. Complication enters because the types mentioned have something more in common than mere self-conscious-

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ness. Each is a character with an ideal vision, an unformulated but nevertheless deep belief in the existence (somewhere) of a thoroughly admirable social world that would admit him if it but knew that he existed. The imagined world is rather less like Proust's Paris, perhaps, than like the Boston that T. S. Eliot once described as refined past the point of civilization; or, saying the same thing in another way, it is often more like a superstition than a vision, and owes much to the preservation, even in tanktown colleges, of certain relics of aristocratic tradition. But it does have influence. Out of respect for it many academics display an intense anxiety about coarseness and vulgarity, become Anglophiles or Francophiles, restrain themselves from reading any item that has ever interested the common world, and sometimes even go so far as to invent private languages in order to suggest acquaintance with a standard unavailable to ordinary men.[2] What all this means is that snobbery and climbing have a moral dimension in academe that they often don't have elsewhere. Behind them both stands a passion for the ideal that needn't be an object of scorn. A subtle novelist would manage to hint that this passion, no matter how mean the particulars of its daily expression, is nevertheless a fructifying social force.

Suggestions for Character Analysis III: The Instinct for Self-Dramatization

Another significant element in the teacher's nature that existing academic fiction points at *sparsim* (never actually comprehends) is the tendency toward self-dramatization. According to the cliché, the teacher is the only American who still lives in a rigorously structured society, who still believes in Superiors and Inferiors, Juniors and Seniors—and there is some truth in the statement. The uninformed, though, think of the academic hierarchy as a mere business of professorial rank, which is a mistake. Divisions of rank vary in significance from institution to institution and within the departments of any single institution. The

[2] If the author of the desiderated novel investigates this subject—the private languages and pronunciations of academe—he will discover that there is no uniformity in the field. Cambridge *chic* differs from Charlottesville *chic* and neither has much in common with Berkeley *chic* or Williamstown *chic*. Neither at Harvard nor at Chicago does an academic "give a speech"; but in the East he "holds forth," while in the Midwest it is his "turn to utter"; neither in New Haven nor California is Thoreau Tho-REAU; but in the East he is THO-reau, while in the West he is Throw.

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only distinction of absolute importance is of course that between teachers and students—and no other distinction works as powerfully in the cause of self-dramatization. This isn't to say that the relation between teacher and student lacks dignity; when unvulgarized by opportunistic Pals-ism, or by cheap psychological "counseling," it is an admirable human relation: the affection that a man can feel for a person to whom he knows he has taught something—even if only to tie a fly or to tack downwind—can be strong and ennobling.

Unfortunately, however, the relation of teacher to student is less commonly a relation of individuals than of a leader to a mass. And in consequence moments occur when the academic community has about it an unpleasant flavor of Rome in the days of multiple tribunes. (You can look in vain for any hint of this in the academic novels of the last twenty years.) The student body is a kind of constant; it cannot revolt, or at any rate its revolutions injure—only the gods, to assign the deans a label that will satisfy them. Hence the student body takes on the character of a Populace, and the teacher comes to feel—unless he is forced into engagements with individual student minds—a swelling of the imperial theme within himself. If the swelling proceeds far, the professor is likely to give himself to the joys of personal mythmaking, hinting (by means of skilful self-dramatization) that the Populace might well find him more amusing or interesting than his Policies (or subject matter). He thus loses his position as a knower and sharer of knowledge, and moves toward the status of a performer.

Like each of the other tendencies of personality mentioned here, the tendency toward self-dramatization can be regarded as a positive quality of character. It does not follow that, if a member of one profession is vain of his mind, the members of all other professions are free of vanity, and in any case the man of reasonable intelligence who admires his own mind has hit upon an object of affection more respectable than a Countess Mara tie or a Porsche. Again, the conviction that snobbery is the hallmark of the academy can be used as a ground of contempt only by a fool: it is plain (to repeat) that in some instances snobbery is kin to pride, and, however un-Christian to acknowledge it, there is no deceit in the claim that civilization itself is a product of pride. And as for the impulse toward self-dramatization—it can be read as evidence of

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the presence of a latent personal vibrancy, a desire to make one's weight felt, a will to contend against the world rather than to remain passive in face of it, that fearful men can only envy.

In sum: there *are* interesting complications of character in the college grove, items that can be made to yield a good deal in the way of human truth. The academic novel of the past, with its ready-welded conflict of Selfishness against Selflessness, snobs against liberals, elegant aesthetes against hard-driving Jews, is at best a boyish fantasy: do not let it get past your desk. Hire a man who believes in the possibility that complication can exist even on a campus, and let him pursue that possibility far enough to win out over the stereotypes.

A Possible Theme:

A plausible theme for an academic novel now might lie in the new difficulties of professorial contention against the World. As everyone knows, this contention is a valuable key to professorial character: the professor is a man who, offered an opportunity to act out his life in terms of the generally accepted American values, has opted out. He conceives of his "career" less as a means, a way of providing for a family, a way of gaining position or security or power, than as an end in itself. He is a notoriously inefficient bargainer for money or promotion not merely because he is timid but because at one point in his life he rejected the goal of efficiency in these enterprises, and thereafter was led—by an impersonal force called scholarship, the tradition of learning, or civilization—into a round of study that assumed in its forms, if not in every practice, that his purpose was simply to seek truth. The professor's rebellion, to call it that, was always imperfect, subject to personal adaptations and needs. But when the professor took his first turning he faced in a direction that his country as a whole has not faced since the seventeenth century—away, that is, from the pursuit of physical comfort: and the memory of that first turning never fades.

But the memory in itself is not enough to underwrite the daily renewal of commitment and critical passion. Poverty once nourished the professor in his otherness, in his conviction of his own faithlessness to American convention (and faithfulness to original American ideals). But as his situation alters he finds himself faced

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with the problem of choosing a style of life, modes of consumption that will be in keeping with his own sense of his difference, his own expressed hostility to the conventions of affluence. Asceticism is no longer open to him—except as a strategy of evasion. He must buy, he must choose—what? (A president of an Eastern college of substantial reputation, addressing a mixed group of professors and administrators, spoke enthusiastically a year ago of the likelihood that the average "teacher-scholar" at the rank of full professor will soon be earning at least $25,000 a year—provided, as the man warned, he is shrewd enough to husband his time, turn out lucrative textbooks, and avail himself of the various consultantships that will ever more frequently be offered him. Implicit here is the mistaken assumption that the professor has for years been biting the stable walls in anticipation of an opportunity to become a wheeler and dealer.)

On the one hand (pursuing this point), the professor tells himself that it is right for money-men to recognize his work. But the recognition he is offered is in fact an invitation to become less recognizable, to accept styles and norms invented by one or another slick magazine. Here lie the roots of a psychological conflict that, in time, will figure centrally in professorial character. It is true to be sure that there is always a crisis for the idealist in his moment of material plenty: the theme is common in American fiction. But the case of the professor is uncommon: his gods and traditions are not obscure, and his effort to honor them and increase their dignity (without compromising it in the eyes of the godless and traditionless) creates situations of great strain—and even of some poignancy. A novel that looked into this matter would at least be looking into the future.

A Final Word:

Above all, above all: let the professor think on the page: real thoughts in a real library or study or classroom. Let the contents of his mind be shown: nothing about the academic is more interesting than his rumination, yet no one ever exhibits it. In existing academic novels—this is what triggered the memorandum you are now reading—in existing novels teachers who are (in theory) fully conscious of Freud, Darwin, Durkheim and other heroes of the last century speak and act like medieval men, define moral prob-

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lems in the vocabulary of Aquinas, accept a psychology that Dr. Johnson would have thought outmoded, discuss political or cultural issues in the categories of Disraeli or Gladstone or Matthew Arnold, embrace ideas and modes of analysis that in fact have not been alive in most academic minds for a half century. Plainly the novelist will have to know something if he is going to give adequate representation to modern intellectual accents and idioms. He will have to believe in the mind, and he will also have to have some faint consciousness of the major revolutions in thought of this age. If he has this intelligence, if he can see the academy as a place *of* this world, if he can allow for the possibility that professorial character can be as complicated as, say, lawyerly or journalistic character, if—

But why run on? If your man lacks all these qualifications you will simply publish him anyway: and the *Saturday Review* will hint that he's written a *roman á clef*: and there will be that much more stupidity in the world for academics to cudgel their brains against. There will also, though, be yet another occasion for what is called the last laugh. For the professor knows, even if novelists, editors and Old Boys don't, that if he were as uninteresting in fact as he is made out to be in fiction, the attempt to take his likeness would have been given up ages ago. Up academe! in short, and a gesture of hand and elbow to all the blind peepers of its past.

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JOHN WAIN

London Letter

FIRST, THE WIDER BACKGROUND. Most thinking people in Britain are worried now, in the spring of 1962, about the following topics in order: (1) physical survival, (2) economic survival, (3) social welfare, (4) education. All these issues naturally interpenetrate in a number of ways, yet each has its own recognizable outline. Worries about (1) tend to centre on the general issue of nuclear armament and disarmament; the C.N.D. (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) has been with us for about five years now, and it has certainly shown a considerable power of organization and of mustering scattered opinion. The main difficulty in trying to assess the scope and influence of anything like the C.N.D. is that mere numbers don't count for much; the annual protest march, from Aldermaston to London or vice versa, is always thousands strong, but no one can overlook the fact that a great many young people join it simply as a high-spirited adventure which happens to be high-minded as well; not all the eighteen-year-olds who joyfully pack rucksacks and stream off behind their banners for an Easter on the open road give the impression of having thought in much detail over the consequences of one-sided disarmament, and some of them are all too obviously doing it to get away from their parents for a few days. (If ever I write a *1984*, the equivalent of Winston Smith will be someone who was conceived on the Aldermaston March—not, I hasten to say, that I have any concrete evidence that Anything of That Sort Goes On; it's just the symbolism of the thing, y'know.) The older and graver people who turn out to C.N.D. demonstrations are drawn from a widely divergent series of pigeon-holes: Christian pacifists, Communists and fellow-travellers (including the smartest sub-division of these latter, the New Left), and ordinary decent people who have simply had enough of nuclear threat and counter-threat and feel they must do something and not just sit there and wait for it. The whole moral-strength-through-military-weakness position is a very interesting one, both psychologically and politically; it has been studied in a very *engagé* and hostile way by such writers as Constantine Fitzgibbon (notably in his novel *When The Kissing Had To Stop),* but probably a full history of its attitudes will have to wait till the future, if there is a future. Meanwhile, one can't help noticing uneasily that its intellectual figure-head is Lord Russell, and Lord Russell's solutions to international political problems would be worth recalling in some detail, if one felt unkind enough.

Number (2), economic survival, is our version of the anxiety about economic developments which every Western country is now feeling. Whether we go in with the Common Market sooner or later, go in we

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shall, and the inevitable readjustments will mean hardship for some industries, some firms and some individuals. Numbers (3) and (4) are not exactly different sides of the one coin; the Welfare State, established during our years of poverty and struggle between 1945 and 1950, is something most of us feel more or less proud of, but lately its fabric has been showing some ominous gaps and tears; housing, for instance, has lagged so far behind that numerous people in London are homeless; the wives and children are dumped in Reception Centres, the men get beds where they can and spend all their free time searching for accommodation they can afford, and they don't find any because there isn't any, and meanwhile the swank office blocks go up higher and higher, blotting out the smoky London sun from the streets which must house the people who are to work in them. As for education, it is perhaps the worst problem of all; the war-time population bulge, having passed through the schools and reduced them to rubble, is just about to hit the universities, and the Government has chosen this moment to slash the quinquennial allowance. We have had two universities in this country for so many centuries that we cannot get used to the idea that we must now have more; the "provincial universities," of which London is one, have concentrated for a hundred years on educating the body of average students which was left over when Oxford and Cambridge had taken the cream. As a result, they have become stigmatized as second-rate, and now, though they have more funds, better teachers and better equipment, and in general more to offer than they once had, they still cannot compete in prestige with the two senior universities. All our clever young people prefer to be squashed somehow into an overcrowded Oxbridge, half-taught by fatigued dons who are trying to spread their time and attention much too thinly, and in general get their education by a system which was all very well when the population of this country was half or one-quarter of what it is now. The remedy, which is to build at least one (to begin with) new university that will have the glitter and the prestige of the older ones, but will do it by being attractively modern and forward-looking instead of seductively ancient and traditional, is not adopted because it would cost too much, and one of the permanent conditions of English education is that it has to be done on a shoe-string.

So those are our public worries: our private worries, like yours, are to do with our personal lives, whether we are getting lung cancer from cigarettes, and in general how to get more love and money. At such a time, people welcome diversions, and there have been several on the literary-intellectual scene lately. Much the biggest was a certain judo demonstration given at Cambridge on February 28th, under the title of the Richmond Lecture, when F. R. Leavis, as if to prove that on the eve of retirement he has lost none of his skill, threw Sir Charles Snow over his shoulder several times and then jumped on him. The lecture was closed to reporters, but garbled reports filtered into some of the

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daily papers, and finally Dr..Leavis allowed the full text to appear in the *Spectator*. The whole thing made more of a stir than one would have thought; in central London, where surely a quarrel between two literary men cannot bulk very large, the paper was sold out and unobtainable within a few hours.

Many people, particularly if they hadn't been readers of *Scrutiny* in the old days and therefore familiar with the tradition of all-out personal destruction that magazine so signally failed to make respectable, were genuinely shocked at the brutality of the attack; while such echoes as reached the man in the street appear to have confirmed him in his belief that "intellectuals" are people who spend all their time indulging in passionate feuds of obscure motivation.

Actually, of course, the motivation wasn't at all obscure. For some time, Sir Charles has been blandly offering an account of "the Two Cultures," literary and scientific, which has been—to say the least of it—grossly inadequate in its account of the literary mind and curiously uncompelling in its account of the scientific. This wouldn't have mattered if Sir Charles had not been accepted by the public mind as a Sage, the true voice of mature wisdom in our time, and if he hadn't in turn accepted this as his natural role. Sir Charles is a decent and fair-minded man, genuinely doing his best to grapple with important problems, and one's uneasiness was caused less by what he himself said and did than by the sense that he was being carried upwards on a thrust of half-articulate public opinion, and that sooner or later this thrust would spend itself and leave him very high up with nothing to hold on to. That the *débâcle* would be precipitated by Leavis was something I must say I hadn't anticipated, yet once done it seemed natural enough: two Cambridge men, both widely accepted as Sages but not in the same kinds of circles, and with diametrically opposed temperaments and beliefs.

Leavis, of course, overdid the demolition; Sir Charles's admirers may have claimed for him a distinction that isn't really there, but it is absurd to say "he is intellectually as undistinguished as it is possible to be," as if he were the village idiot. Again, there is point in making a fairly drastic adverse criticism of Snow as a novelist, if your concern is to point out that his acceptance by a large public depends on a special kind of *réclame* that makes him both a distinguished scientist and a considerable novelist. Snow's idea of the novel is exactly Trollope's; his performance may be better than Trollope's or worse—I can't say, because I have never managed to read Trollope in bulk, any more than I have read Galsworthy or Snow in bulk. So I would go along with a reasonably cool appraisal of Sir Charles as a novelist: but I see no reason for Leavis'

> As a novelist he doesn't exist; he doesn't begin to exist. He can't be said to know what a novel is. The nonentity is apparent on every page of his fictions—consistently manifested, whatever aspect of a novel one looks for.

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The whole thing left one with a sense of comradely sympathy for Sir Charles, as it might be for a man who had been involved in a serious motor accident. This feeling, however, vanished abruptly one week later. In its issue of March 16th, the *Spectator* published several pages of fiery letters, most of them pro-Snow. It is these pages that deserve serious attention as a barometer of the present state of intellectual England. I have no space to quote: the entire document will be consulted, not once but repeatedly, by anyone (now or in the future) who wants the flavour of 1962 in England. In a word, the quality of the support offered by the Snow faction was such as to prove beyond doubt one of Leavis' main points: that the elevation of Sir Charles to his present position of Tribal Sage is the work of forces which exist independently of him and of which he has become the focus; that he has been "created" by "the cultural conditions manifested in his acceptance." Most of the correspondents who rushed to pull out Leavis' darts, and apply balm of one kind and another, offered such perfect illustrations of the *naiveté* and emptiness that Leavis was attacking that they left nothing for a pro-Leavis party to do. William Gerhardi, for instance, boiled over for several columns with a personal abuse of Leavis that went just as far in the direction of personality as anything Leavis had said about Snow, and seemed the more offensive in being used in the service, not of anything that could be called an idea, but merely a series of reflexive twitches. Mr. Gerhardi was typical of most of the defenders in his anxiety to build up Sir Charles into a figure worthy of the highest allegiance; one of his points, for instance, was that Leavis, who doesn't know Russian, ought not to challenge any of Sir Charles's judgments on Russian literature, for Sir Charles knows the language and reads the literature with the insight of passion. Is this true? I saw something of Sir Charles in Moscow during his first visit, when the foundations of his uncritically admiring attitude were being laid firmly into place, and he certainly didn't know much Russian then; he was content to echo the opinions handed to him by members of the literary bureaucracy, with whom his solidity seemed to me even at that time to be remarkable. That was in 1960; has Sir Charles, in the intervals of his busy life, really had time and energy in the last eighteen months to acquire that inwardness with the Russian language that would justify Mr. Gerhardi's deferring to him as an expert whose judgment cannot be questioned?

Another correspondent, Mr. G. S. Fraser, declared that "men like Snow, at home both in Russia and America, and in a blunt simple way trying to teach these two blunt simple giants to understand each other, may in the end prove greater benefactors of the world than Dr. Leavis." Again, one notices the assumption that Snow is "at home" in Russia: the phrase carries, surely, an implication that he understands the workings of the place, knows how to assess it and deal with it. And again this is what I question. I was, as I say, in the Soviet Union at the same

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time as Sir Charles on his first visit, and had the opportunity of seeing just how the all-important first steps in his approach were made, and what kind of people guided them: and my impression, gained at the time and reinforced by all his public utterances since, is that it is Sir Charles, and not the Soviet authorities, who is being "blunt and simple"; that he believes what they tell him and hands it out to a credulous audience at home who mistake him, as Mr. Gerhardi does, for a sensitive exponent of Russian literature, or, as Mr. Fraser does, for a "benefactor of the world." Personally I don't believe that anyone who spreads confusion and misunderstanding, in however well-meaning a way, is a benefactor of anybody. Sir Charles feels "at home," in Mr. Fraser's sense, among bureaucrats; he reveals, in his novels, both knowledge of and sympathy with the workings of the bureaucratic mind; he knows how battles are won and lost on committees. And of course, when he goes to a country like the Soviet Union where an all-powerful bureaucracy rules everything, he feels that this is the place for him. This fact was amusingly illustrated in a recent television interview between Sir Charles and Malcolm Muggeridge (transcript published in *Encounter*, February 1962). Asked about Russian literary taste, Sir Charles explained:

> They are, they are making a very serious attempt, now, to translate most people whom they think reach a high standard, a highish standard, who are not actually, in their sense, really hostile. That is they wouldn't publish people whom they would call Fascist.
>
> *Muggeridge.* Mm.
>
> *Snow.* That would certainly be true. But that said, I think they're in many ways more open-minded than we are.
>
> *Muggeridge.* Could you imagine yourself living happily in a Communist society?
>
> *Snow.* I think so. It would depend a bit on what I, on my particular profession. You mean me as . . . .
>
> *Muggeridge.* Yes, you as you.
>
> *Snow.* You mean me as me.
>
> *Muggeridge.* You, writer-scientist.
>
> *Snow.* Yes, I think so . . . .

The slight difficulty over identification here ("You mean me as *me*?") reflects the bureaucratic habit of mind very accurately. It seems almost as if, in Sir Charles's eyes, nothing as statistically insignificant as an individual person could be quite real. His happiness in a Communist country would depend ("a bit") on what he was doing; that is, whether he was on top, handing it out, or down below, taking it. And when he says "they," of the Russians, he means "the Soviet bureaucracy," obviously, since it is this bureaucracy, not the Russian people, who are

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making "a serious attempt" to translate foreign writers of "a highish standard" who "are not actually, in their sense, really hostile." It is they, not the people, who dub all criticism, all scepticism about the perfect wisdom of their own decisions, "Fascist." What the common humanity of the Soviet Union feels about it all, we have to try to feel intuitively, since they have no voice.

But enough of this. Mr. Ronald Hingley, of the *Sunday Times,* has been going through the files of Soviet newspapers and reading their reports of some of the things Sir Charles and Lady Snow have been saying at literary dinners and the like. He promises to publish his findings very soon; and it may be that the kind of comfortable literary Englishman represented by Mr. Gerhardi (who is currently at work on a life of Lord Beaverbrook) will decide, on reading some of these pronouncements, that ultimate wisdom and justice does not, after all, reside in this kind of blunt simplicity. And if so, I predict we shall find ourselves forgetting the whole episode quite speedily.

What, apart from politics and apart from controversy, can one point to in the English scene as likely to interest an American observer? In literature, the same steady flow of more or less interesting work is coming off the presses; English novels, like English tailor-made suits, are for the most part well made, unobtrusive, in good taste and likely to wear adequately; but there is little genuine stir or development to report. As a matter of fact, the most striking feature of the English novel at the moment is its dependence on the cinema. Two recent novels on "realistic" themes, set in the provinces and well away from the anybody-for-tennis backdrop of so much English fiction, have been made into highly successful films: *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning.* Mr. Braine's book was already a best-seller before the film gave it a new lease of life; Mr. Sillitoe's, by contrast, was virtually made by the brilliant Karel Reisz film. More recently still, Kingsley Amis' second novel, *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955), has been turned into a most enjoyable film, scripted by Brian Forbes and with Peter Sellers superbly at home in the main role, under the title *Only Two Can Play;* only a few weeks after the film's premiere, the bookstalls blossomed out with paperback copies of the novel, with its original title discreetly tucked away inside and *Only Two Can Play* blazoned on the cover. The book of the film! We might be living in the 'thirties, instead of in the TV era.

The theatre is healthier, with Harold Pinter, Ann Jellicoe, Shelagh Delaney, Henry Livings, John Arden and Peter Schaffer, among others, all working fast and striking new material. Even television, which stifles so much talent and processes most of what it touches to a dreary uniformity, has not altogether succeeded in crushing the life out of the new playwrights, and one or two writers of genuine originality, such as Alun Owen and George Brown, have broken convincingly through the crust. On the production side, Peter Hall goes on from

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strength to strength; he (or, more strictly, the Royal Shakespeare Company or whatever it is called) now controls the most complete set-up in the English theatre: the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon (for Shakespeare), the Aldwych Theatre in London (for heavies generally, including Shakespeare, foreign classics, revivals, new plays by Names, etc.) and the Arts, a small club theatre which can safely risk putting on experimental work. This makes Hall the only manager in London who is in a position, quite literally, to undertake any kind of theatre—and with a permanent company to work with, plus such big guns as Michel St. Denis, appointed a few weeks ago to the post of artistic adviser at the Stratford end. With this kind of thing taking shape, and a host of new writers, things could move.

Things could also move in English poetry; the shortage here is not so much of new poetry as of new criticism; we need to break away from the particularly sterile, nagging criticism that poets have had to endure in the last decade or so, as well as from the bitter internecine quarrels they have been conducting among themselves. There is fresh imaginative talent; what is needed is a climate for it to blossom in. Practical encouragement may prove more beneficial than copy-book maxims, and here the recording companies may soon come to play an important part. The excellent Caedmon series of literary recordings are released over here by the giant Philips concern, and (partly under their influence, partly in response to a general revival of interest in the spoken arts) a number of English firms have taken to issuing records of poets reading their work. *Argo, Jupiter, Listen,* have all done interesting work, and a new concern, "Poets' Lot Ltd.," has an ambitious programme of English and European poetry in hand and intends, as its title indicates, to distribute most of the profits in royalties to the poets. All this is good, because nearly every poet finds that to make a recording of his work has a tonic effect.

On the dark side of the picture, the British press gets steadily worse; it is now far less interesting and respectable than the American. In the daily field, the *Times* and the *Guardian* are still both good newspapers, but elsewhere the picture is black enough. A year or two ago, one could still unhesitatingly recommend the *Observer* as a good Sunday newspaper, but two things have happened since 1960 to shake the *Observer*'s morale; first the appearance of the *Sunday Telegraph* to divide the "quality" Sunday market by three instead of two, and then the enormous expansion of the *Sunday Times* since it was acquired by Roy Thompson, complete with a Gargantuan transatlantic-style colour supplement and a member of the Royal Family on its design staff. Stampeded by this, the *Observer* has smartened itself out of recognition, with jazzy new lay-out and a flushed insistence on talking loudly and brightly, like a guest at a cocktail party who didn't realize the martinis were so strong. Among the week-enders, the *Spectator* holds its form reasonably well, and the *New Statesman* continues to be silly and

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bright, permitting its columnists to say things like, "any attempt to keep Germany disunited has my enthusiastic support. The more walls they build between East and West, the better." Fortunately, in England one doesn't have to read papers to keep up with the news, nor even watch television; the BBC sound broadcasting service gives an excellent, and traditionally impartial, news coverage, employs a team of commentators to analyse and supply background, and brings reputable outside people to the microphone every night at ten o'clock. Every Saturday morning they provide a longish programme, a series of despatches under the title "From Our Own Correspondent," which maintains a very high standard; and the Third Programme gives special attention to important questions of international policy, as in its recent series on "The Strategy of Survival," printed complete in *The Listener* for March 29th, and worth getting hold of. Till the commercial boys get hold of sound radio as they have very largely got hold of television, we have at least that much to be grateful for.

B. H. HAGGIN

Music Chronicle

THE NEW YORK CITY OPERA opened a spring season of contemporary operas written in English with *The Golem,* which proved to be one of the worst of the American works the company has wasted productions on. These have been works which have captured and held the audience's interest with the happenings on the stage, and in which the music has been not the original product of a creative mind but an employment, with varying degrees of skill or lack of skill, of this or that borrowing from the accumulated store of earlier practice—whether Menotti's borrowing of Puccini's practice, which the audience has enjoyed, or another composer's borrowing of "modern" practice, which the audience has accepted as something carrying the words and accompanying the action—the something one accepts in opera. And the people who were interested in Abraham Ellstein's and Sylvia Regan's adaptation of *The Golem* accepted with it the ineffectual musical mish-mash put together by Ellstein.

In striking contrast to Ellstein's dreary ineptitude was the dazzling expertise that Benjamin Britten exhibited in his music for *The Turn of the Screw;* but it was an expertise that proved to be of little service to Myfanwy Piper's dramatic adaptation of the Henry James story. The adaptation was a simplification which entailed a loss: it presented only a few incidents of the story, and these in dialogue and action, without the amplification and enrichment of James's elaborate narra-

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tive writing and comment. And the amplification and enrichment that music could have substituted was not provided by Britten's music: his was an expertise in the manipulation of a "modern" idiom to produce unusual vocal and instrumental sounds, most of which had no expressive relation to the words and action and no attractiveness or interest in themselves. What interest the occasion had was created by the remarkable performances of the two children by Michele Farr and Bruce Zahariades, who amazed one with the assurance of their singing of the difficult music and their operation on the stage, and the performance of the Governess by Patricia Neway, her voice tremulous and shrill but her dramatic powers undiminished. In what these and the other performers did one saw evidence of skill in Allen Fletcher's staging of the work; and Julius Rudel conducted the musical performance efficiently. From my seat on the extreme side down front I saw too little of the scenery to be able to report on it.

The other works presented by the company were Menotti's trashy *The Consul,* Moore's feeble *The Ballad of Baby Doe,* Ward's more competent but not much more important *The Crucible,* and Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess,* whose "Summertime" and other such pieces are, in melodic style and expressive effect, like what Gershwin wrote for his musical shows, making *Porgy* essentially no more than another Gershwin musical, and as such a work that has no more place in the repertory of an opera company than Gershwin's *Strike Up the Band* or Kern's *Show Boat.*

The Metropolitan's new production of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* had sets and costumes designed by Ita Maximowna; and of these the costumes and the interiors of Riccardo's palace, Renato's home and the opera house (in place of the palace ballroom) were rich and handsome in their realistic style, and the desolate heath at midnight was made frighteningly grisly by the distorted gallows; but Ulrica's hut had not only the usual vastness but a complicated stage construction to make it unbelievable. Moreover, the built-in absurdities of the action in this scene cannot be eliminated; but staged within the framework of the new set those absurd comings and goings and unconcealed and unconcealing concealments seemed to stand out more obtrusively this time. On the other hand in the scene in Renato's home it was not the set that compelled Guenther Rennert, who staged the work, to have the returning Amelia and Renato enter at one corner, the visiting conspirators enter later at another corner, and Oscar enter still later at a third corner. But at other times the staging was good. As for the musical performance, it was not one like Toscanini's in which every played and sung note fitted into the musical shape created by the conductor, but one in which the singers were free to stretch the phrase and hold on to a high note, and Nello Santi, the conductor, created what shape he could around their singing. And the singing was not all first-class: the Riccardo was Carlo Bergonzi, who used his agreeable light tenor without forcing and with taste and grace; the Amelia was Leonie Rysanek,

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whose soprano, so exciting in its beauty, steadiness and power only a few years ago, was now tremulous and unlovely; the Renato was Robert Merrill, his baritone somewhat coarse, his singing sonorously expansive; the Ulrica was Jean Madeira, who used her rich contralto with impressive dramatic force; the Oscar was Anneliese Rothenberger, with an agreeable light soprano that didn't carry in the huge opera house.

Viennese operetta is not a proper concern of the American Opera Society, which should not, then, have put on its performance of Lehar's *The Merry Widow*. Handel's oratorios, on the other hand, are works of dramatic character on Biblical subjects in which he continues to write in the musical style of his operas; and the society's performance of *Samson* provided a welcome opportunity to hear an unfamiliar work of this category which turned out to be very fine. What stood out in this one hearing was the writing for Samson—remarkable, for one thing, in its communication of personal magnitude not only in the bravura passages of the aria "Why does the God of Israel sleep?" and the fiery recitatives, but in the poignant phrases of "Total eclipse," the quiet progression of "Thus when the sun." And this magnitude was made overwhelming by the singing of the tenor Jon Vickers—its outpouring of vocal magnificence and expressive force in the early acts, its marvelously sustained *mezza-voce* delivery of "Thus when the sun" in the last one. Dalila's florid "With plaintive notes," sung beautifully by the soprano Judith Raskin, did not today make her the seductress it presumably made her in Handel's day; but the florid brilliance of the Israelitish Woman's "Let the bright Seraphim" at the end, excellently sung by the soprano Eileen di Tullio, was appropriate; and there was dramatically suitable writing for Samson's father Manoah, movingly sung by the bass Chester Watson, and the Philistine captain Harapha, effectively sung by the baritone Norman Treigle. What was sung by Samson's friend Micah I cannot recall, having been distracted by the poor condition of the counter-tenor Russell Oberlin's beautiful voice and by the unctuous dramatic manner ludicrously reminiscent of Joxer in *Juno and the Paycock*. But I recall fine choral passages, sung well by Margaret Hillis' chorus. The fitting of all these elements into the single progression was done by Nicola Rescigno, who knows how to shape a nineteenth-century Italian opera, but on this occasion showed that he had no idea of how to articulate the flow of a work of Handel.

The society's final performance was one of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, whose writing in Rossini's comic and florid bravura styles again impressed me as even more brilliant than that of *The Barber of Seville*. It was a performance in which on the one hand the singers did a lot of acting to make the dramatic action explicit and clear, but on the other hand this action was made unclear by the omission of the passage at the end of Act 1 in which Alidoro takes Cenerentola to the ball and the one in Act 2 in which she gives the Prince one of her two matching bracelets and bids him search for the possessor of the other. The occasion was given musical distinction by the singing of the mezzo-soprano

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Teresa Berganza, whose agreeable voice produced all the notes in the rapid florid passages, instead of only half of them, with ease, grace and delightful bravura style; the singing of the bass Ezio Flagello (Dandini), who used his beautiful voice with the inflections of a superb musical comedian; and the more extravagant buffo singing of the bass Fernando Corena (Don Magnifico). But what Berganza sang with ease, grace and style in the first duet of Cenerentola and the Prince, the tenor Charles Anthony was able to repeat only with a lack of those qualities that continued to make his singing painful to hear. As for the performance conducted by Roscigno, it lacked the vital energy, the sharp contours, the sustained tension in the big ensembles, that I remembered in the recorded Glyndebourne Festival performance conducted by Gui; more than once singers and orchestra were not held precisely together.

I might point out that *La Cenerentola* was not an unfamiliar work of the kind the American Opera Society was set up to acquaint the public with: the New York City Opera's 1953 production, revived in 1958, was one of its most distinguished achievements. The society would have served its subscribers better with a performance of *William Tell,* which would have revealed to them Rossini's powers in serious writing. And this work would be a better choice for next year than some which the society has announced as possibilities—Kalman's *Countess Maritza,* Lehar's *Gypsy Love,* Massenet's *Hérodiade.* So would Musorgsky's first (1869) version of *Boris Godunov,* which has had no performance in this country since Stokowski's in Philadelphia in 1930. And if the society doesn't perform these works the New York City Opera should. Its production of *La Cenerentola* was a great success; and it would serve the public better by producing other valuable old works that the Metropolitan doesn't produce than by producing new works of little or no value.

The later concerts of the Symphony of the Air's Beethoven series confirmed the impressions of Alfred Wallenstein that I got at the first one. As a musician he continued to exhibit a sense for continuity and coherence of musical flow and shape that made his articulation of the *Coriolanus* and *Leonore* No. 1 Overtures and Seventh and Eighth Symphonies completely satisfying; as a conductor he exhibited the authority that enabled him to get the orchestra to produce the shapes in sound that he wanted; but he did not always exhibit the ability to balance and blend the sounds of the instruments; and some of the big sonorities in the Seventh were raucous.

One of the concerts offered the Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 4 with the Russian pianist Gilels, a heavy-handed and insensitive performer on earlier occasions, who this time played some phrases with a new lightness and delicacy. But one didn't hear the plastically coherent shaping of phrase and the relating of one phrase to the next in a coherent succession—to say nothing of the more beautiful and more varied tone from the piano—that were heard in the young Israeli pianist Daniel Barenboim's performance of the Concerto No. 3 at a later concert.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

MANY ERGS HAVE BEEN EXPENDED by critics like Eric Bentley on the discussion of the relative merits of translation and adaptation of foreign plays for the American theatre. Though there is little doubt that translation is much the better method, having against it only—like Christianity, according to Bernard Shaw—that it has never been put into practice, it seems to me that both terms, "translation" and "adaptation," are less than adequate when one deals with recent Broadway history. It would be more relevant to argue the merits of dilution versus adulteration, castration versus decortication, decimation versus pulverization. A fine example of all six of these methods was Gore Vidal's version of Dürrenmatt's *Romulus der Grosse.*

Between Dürrenmatt and Vidal, alas, there is not a shred of that "wonderfull consimility of phansey" that Aubrey tells us united Beaumont and Fletcher. Where Dürrenmatt wrote a trenchant, tough comedy with profoundly disturbing overtones, Vidal gave us a lightweight, mincing farce with occasional mawkish posturing. As Dürrenmatt conceives it, the last Roman emperor plays the empire into the hands of the Germans (or Goths) because he thinks Rome hopelessly decadent, and the Germans under Odoacer such sterner stuff as his dreams are made on. But Odoacer himself, aware of the impending barbarism of Germany, comes not to conquer but to submit to Romulus's superior wisdom and humanism. There is nothing left but for Romulus to say, "Let's hurry up. Once more, for the last time, let us play comedy. Let us act as if all accounts had been settled down here, and spirit had triumphed over the matter called Man." How does Vidal render this? "We shall as sovereigns act as though all the accounts in the world had been finally settled, as though spirit had finally triumphed over matter." Here, in a nutshell, are Vidal's two main failings: turning terseness into prolixity, and then missing the point. For the point is "die Materie Mensch": matter is not something around man, or even part of man, it *is* man. Vidal ignores the *Mensch* and, characteristically, unmans the text. And instead of Dürrenmatt's enlightened emperor, whose cynicism turns out to be the last desperate attempt at hopefulness, Vidal, with the help of Cyril Ritchard, gives us a Romulus who swishes about ("Hail, divine Caesar!—Ooo . . . ooh! You eggs-aggerate!") among other assorted cooers and cluckers. "The part," said a woman behind me, "seems to have been written for Cyril Ritchard." Truer inanity was never spoken.

Since drama critics, unlike fiction writers, do not get whole issues of magazines turned over to them, I cannot itemize the details of the rape of Dürrenmatt's play—if you will pardon this inappropriately virile

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metaphor. What Vidal contributes is countless vulgar jokes like "Galloped all by himself? Without a horse?" or the "Going, going, gone!" with which an effete art dealer announces his departure, or the imperial chamberlains retiring to write *"Backstairs With the Twelve Caesars*—the sales in Great Britain alone will keep us comfortably in our old age," or "Your empire isn't worth a plugged *denarius!*" and ceaseless "timely" chatter about things like medical care for the aged, graduated income tax, and agonizing reappraisal. What he further adds is dreary "psychological motivation," background matter, explanations, and foursquare foreshadowing—he refers to it in an article in *Esquire:* "I gave as many clues as I could"; Dürrenmatt, it seems, "had neglected to dramatize his situation"! (Shades of the movie version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* with its "Additional Dialogue by Sam Taylor.")

By way of dramatizing Dürrenmatt, then, Vidal has added, besides the aforementioned explanations, such zircons as "Sicily should be fun at this time of the year, especially the beach!" (wistful charm); "Life is a river, a flood—you cannot change its course" (Pre-Socratic profundity); "The present, the day, the moment, the instant, *now!*" (pure poetry, direct from that dwelling place of the Muses, Mount Thesaurus, and proudly reiterated in the play). And when all these fail him, Mr. Vidal resorts to a line from Chekhov, Wilde, or Shaw, watered down lest the borrowing become too obvious. Excised, on the other hand, are all the surprises (Vidal: "I even tried to explain some of the ironies. . . ."), the true bitter wit of the play, the verbal music, and, above all, any historical reference for which Biblical spectacles in Cinemascope do not constitute a sufficient educational prerequisite. Excised, too, with the help of the cast, Joseph Anthony's misdirection, garish scenery and costumes, was any sign of Dürrenmatt's sturdy masculinity of approach. *Romulus* closed, appropriately, after 69 performances, hoist, as it were, with its own petard.

So much for the glory that was Dürrenmatt. Now for the grandeur that was Brecht. George Tabori, with the assistance of Gene Frankel whose Theatre Workshop needed acting exercises, put together bits and pieces of Brechtiana, not so much into a mosaic as into a comfy crazy quilt or a sampler with nice homey legends embroidered on it. When this was transferred to a theatre as *Brecht on Brecht,* the reviewers, led by that worthy choragus Howard Taubman, hailed the evening and its putative author for their heart-warming humanity. Audiences started pouring into the Theatre de Lys to find a Brecht who was (1) against totalitarianism, (2) a friend of little folks everywhere, (3) the enemy of Hollywood, and (4) almost completely unrelated to Brecht. What one could never have guessed from this out-of-context olla-podrida is that Brecht was (a) the champion of communism, (b) the foe of America and democracy, (c) contemptuous of the Little Guy, and (d) a grouch of genius, but a grouch: Alceste with a knout.

All this was pointed out in Robert Brustein's review in *The New*

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Republic, and in my own, in *Theatre Arts.* Wrote Brustein: "George Tabori's Brecht has been castrated for the ANTA ladies. . . . Tabori's Brecht apparently *has* no politics . . . and without a politics of indignation, Brecht is almost indistinguishable from Thornton Wilder." I wrote: "The Brecht we are offered here could easily pass for Will Rogers, Norman Vincent Peale, Hal Holbrook doing Mark Twain, Jack Paar, or whoever the currently preconized middlebrow humorist may be." These reviews were sent to Helene Weigel, Brecht's widow and the guiding spirit of the Berliner Ensemble, who, it is reported, muttered darkly about suing Tabori. Tabori proceeded to justify himself by saying (I am told) that he merely wanted to save Brecht from the charge of communism—which is tantamount to clearing Jesus from the charge of Christianity. Confronted with me on a radio program, Gene Frankel said that *Brecht on Brecht* was a fair cross section, that Brecht had a genuinely sweet side to him, and who was I to enshrine "my Brecht" as the only authentic one? To which I replied that I would like nothing better than to be shown a sweet side of Brecht—other than one which acts as a come-on to arouse hopes in the characters and spectators which are then to be kicked over all the more ruthlessly; that if this was a true cross section of Brecht, could Mr. Frankel point to one anti-democratic, anti-American, or anti-John Doe item in it; and that I was not in the least interested in "my Brecht," only in Brecht's Brecht.

If I go into these matters rather than into the details of what the six unfortunate mummers do at the Theatre de Lys under Frankel's even more unfortunate direction, I do so because our theatre faces a serious danger. Hitherto it was a question of how to see any Brecht, what with production rights extremely hard to secure. Now, I fear, the problem will be how to find any Brecht in what we are seeing. And if, for example, Cheryl Crawford's forthcoming *Mother Courage,* or David Merrick's *Arturo Ui,* should turn out to be the genuine article, no one will be more deeply shocked than those theatre-goers who have been lulled with the false security of *Brecht on Brecht.*

The Phoenix Theatre rose from its ashes, in which it had been wallowing, and produced the first play by an American film and television writer as its own first new play. This was *Who'll Save the Plowboy?* by Frank D. Gilroy, and it was not only intelligent, sound, honest, enormously promising, but also remarkably good. It interweaves two problems: first, that of the loveless marriage of Albert Cobb, a yokel who had allowed an army buddy to convince him he was meant to be a big, happy farmer—at which he failed ignominiously, to end up as a tiny, urban nonentity; and of Helen Cobb, who had married him as the last alternative to embittered, barren loneliness, and who now helps their marriage along into a quietly ugly warfare based on individual failure and mutual fiasco. Secondly, the problem of Larry Doyle, the old army buddy, who saved this "plowboy's" life at the cost of a wound

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whose aftereffects are slowly devouring his own. At the brink of death, he arrives to inspect that family happiness which must justify his solitary sacrifice. The play proceeds to show how various kinds of mean pretense—that the Cobbs are a happy family, that Doyle is a normal, healthy man—are gradually absorbed by a more generous pretense. The purpose of this pretense is not merely superficial well-being, but a difficult, desperate assault on the ugliness of life by giving something small but genuine which might bring about—not love or joy, perhaps, but at least a struggling solidarity. Let's Pretend becomes Let's Extend: extend the effort which is only one step up the mountain, with stubbed toes, bloody fingernails, crumbling rocks underfoot, but up: one whole, gallant, pitiful step up.

The two men, Gerald O'Loughlin and William Smithers, performed commendably, but Rebecca Darke, as the wife, was brilliant. She was a smoldering, black flame, almost too indolent even to hiss and sputter, only crackling malevolently. Her voice stung, each sneering syllable drawn out thin and dropping like wormwood from her lips; the volume almost never rose beyond the reach of a muting self-irony—"Death or a new stove, I'll settle for either one." But in this grisly verging on comedy, managed with equal adroitness by actress and author, the woman became both more believable and more appalling. It is too bad that Mr. Gilroy's beautiful play—lacking that last fillip of perfection, but beautiful all the same—was forced off the boards so soon. This happened because the Phoenix, despite efforts in that direction, is not a repertory theatre and cannot keep even a critically and popularly acclaimed play running. If there were no other arguments in favor of repertory theatre, the premature disappearance of *Plowboy* would be quite a sufficient one in itself.

Having served up such excellent, though plain, meat and potatoes, the Phoenix next turned to a rich, fruity dessert, and came up with Jerome Robbins's production of Arthur Kopit's *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad*. Kopit's play is a bittersweet prank, made up in part of engaging schoolboy sassiness (it was written while the author was still a Harvard undergraduate), and in part of devices and techniques of the "Theatre of the Absurd" or "anti-drama." But college humor seldom sustains beyond the length of a skit or two in a musical revue, and "anti-drama" is practiced best by writers old enough to have become genuinely embittered, then genuinely disillusioned, and, at last, wafted even above their disillusionment onto a comic Olympus from which to drop lighted matches on the wooden heads of the world.

The play concerns a wizened, stuttering young boy whose mother is a sort of man-eating Claire Zachanassian (out of Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*) as Walt Disney might see her, and whose girl friend is a nymphomaniacal Little Orphan Annie. The boy's life is spent under maternal house arrest among Mamma's menagerie which includes a Siamese

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kitten-eating piranha, insect-eating Venus flytraps, and the embalmed body of her late husband whose insides she herself has ingested. The boy is allowed three fabulous collections—of books, stamps, and coins —and only one (1) seemingly innocuous little girl playmate who turns out to be a baby Whore of Babylon. The two more than wife-size females lock in deadly combat over this unhappy manikin, but just as the girl is about to seduce the boy on Mamma's bed, Dad's cadaver hurtles warningly out of the closet, and—well, that is the problem with the production.

Even where the play is witty and gruesome enough to stand on its own bizarrely spindly legs, the ghoulish overelaboration of Jerome Robbins's production and direction comes tumbling out of its cupboard and bowls over the proceedings. Unprecedented for off-Broadway, 45,000 dollars worth of bad taste has gone into decking out Kopit's work with totally uncalled-for film sequences whose style can best be described as "Antique-Shop Moderne," outrageous frippery in costume and scenic design (including a traveling-coffin for Dad that looks like a Biedermeyer candy-box), and some rather queer casting that makes Dad's mummy look no more cadaverous, aged, or even masculine, than a member of the Ballets U.S.A. troupe. The very program, quaintly shaped and printed, suggested a dance-card for a cotillion. Among the performances, only Austin Pendleton's uncompromising honesty in the part of the boy emerged hopefully from this Pandora's box of a production: neither Jo Van Fleet's "method" acting, nor Barbara Harris's equally rigorous "Second City" improvising proved adaptable to the needs of the play.

But the play itself is far from self-sustaining. The scene, for instance, in which the mother, Mme Rosepettle, vamps the luckless Commodore Roseabove (everyone in the play is called Rose-something-or-other, as if, by any other name, he could not smell so foul), and tells him the story of her life in an interminable monologue that is a pastiche of all the absurder aspects of the "Theatre of the Absurd," is excruciatingly boring and pointless. Still, Mr. Kopit is interesting, and he is very young, and, for someone who got his A.B. in engineering, a helluva engineer. Let him mature a little and give us a show that has less baby-blue and Robbins-egg blue about it, and it may be something worth waiting for.

Thornton Wilder's plays have an inverse-Antaean quality: the closer down to earth they get, the weaker they are. Whenever Wilder attempts to achieve imaginative reality and tell us "truths" about human beings, we get a sentimentalization of the little guy that is as unbelievable as it is indigestible. "So eine Altmodischkeit und solch ein Stumpfsinn," wrote Gottfried Benn of *The Skin of Our Teeth,* and went on to speak of the play's dilettantism and provincialism. And of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey,* D. H. Lawrence noted, "I found [it] a dull dough-nut with artificial jam in it." But let the subject-matter get away from reality—

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let it be, for example, what goes on in the rarefied minds of babies, as in *Infancy,* the best of the three new *Plays for Bleecker Street*—and Wilder can be enormously convincing. After all, nobody knows for sure what goes on in the heads of infants, and it may be that Mr. Wilder, who looks more and more like a fat, old baby, and whom I myself have heard utter the infantile dictum that certain plays by Frank O'Hara and Kenneth Koch are "the grass roots of the American theatre," may qualify as the supreme student of the infant psyche on the basis of the venerable apothegm "it takes one to know one."

Infancy is, for the most part, delightful. Two babies, wheeled side by side in Central Park, confess to each other their overweening ambition to learn fancier words, higher mathematics, more advanced geography; their parents and nurses, to shut them up, provide them with such thin intellectual pabulum—or pablum—as the multiplication table or the list of the boroughs of New York City, but they spurn such propaedeutic pap. They bawl out their *libido sciendi* and *libido sentiendi* in ever louder (though, to the stupid adults, incomprehensible) vocables, till one of the babes climaxes this Faustian urge with the cry, "I want to make a baby!" But when we come to the adults that surround all this "striving against swaddling bands," as Blake so aptly put it, they are a drearily burlesque lot and go in for jokes that smell either of the mausoleum or of the bathroom. Thus we have a comic Jewish mother frantically deliberating in mid-park whether the toilet of the Museum of Natural History is indeed the nearest one, and then racing off to it. Or we hear her telling a nursemaid that Baby Moe was giving her husband and her dirty, knowing looks whenever they engaged in intimacies or spoke of personal matters in English. So they switched to Yiddish, but "In two weeks, Albert Einstein got Yiddish!—But he's just a baby, he doesn't understand a thing!—I know that, and you know that, but does *he*?"

The next play, *Childhood,* is the usual excursion into Wilder's Never-Never Land of adult children and childlike parents who share a dream in which they enact something like a dream version of Wilder's *The Happy Journey:* a trip across a fanciful U.S.A. in a particularly wayward bus made out of folding chairs. After braving together imaginary Indians and experiencing other mysteries of Togetherness, the dream-metamorphosed parents and children achieve a deeper harmony. "You're just people in our game," say the dream-children to the dream-parents, "that's why we can talk to you." And that is, presumably, why they didn't talk to me: because I was not participating in their enchanted dream, though, I must admit, I was far from wide awake.

But I must have been dreaming while witnessing the third of the plays, *Someone From Assisi,* which is No. 4 of a series to be called "The Seven Deadly Sins," and purports to deal with "Lust." In this bit of apocrypha, St. Francis arrives at the convent of St. Claire, finds there a madwoman who turns out to be the mistress he once deserted and so

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drove out of her mind, takes pity on her and now abandons in turn the excellent soup with saffron the nuns have prepared for him, and accompanies the madwoman home to protect her from the street urchins' stones and the bites of the city's curs. What this gray and vacuous vignette has to do with St. Francis, lust, or the drama, I fear I shall never know.

The Old Vic visited us with three productions, two of which made the "Old" in the company's title seem like typical British understatement: "Superannuated" or even "Prehistoric" would not have been the slightest offense against modesty.

Douglas Seale's staging of *Saint Joan* had enough tedium, bloodlessness, and stiltedness to make it correspond to my mental image of a Walloon touring-company production of *La Princesse Maleine*. Barbara Jefford gave us a full-bodied Maid, replete with a jolly maternal quality, who tried to compensate for the earthbound opulence of her form by pitching the last word of most of her major utterances as far up as possible. Thus "I see now that the loneliness of God is his . . . ." was delivered in a well-tempered mezzo-soprano, but ". . . strength" was floated into an unnerving bit of coloratura. I doubt that this Joan could have raised the Siege of Orléans, but she might have lifted a pair of fifty-pound dumbbells with relative ease. John Clements, as Warwick, was stylish enough, but the general flaccidity of the rest of the cast was only here and there punctuated by an outburst of hamminess, like an old watchdog's sleep with an occasional bark. The director revealed his fine Westphalian hand in scattered bits of unlikely business—Poulengey lovingly picking up the clogs Joan jumped out of in her excitement; two soldiers, after the trial, forming a St. Andrew's cross with their quite unneedfully drawn swords against which Joan is pinioned in a mock crucifixion *pour épater les bourgeois*—for the rest, we get a surfeit of the obvious. John Lambert's music sounded like something even Khachaturian would have seen fit to exclude from *Gayne*, and Leslie Hurry's costumes, though carefully made, did not look quite new enough for any production of *Saint Joan* in the last two decades, nor, somehow, quite old enough to be authentic relics of the fifteenth century.

Michael Benthall's *Macbeth* was an attempt to emphasize the spectacular, the colorful, and the barbaric—but all, rather capriciously, off and on. Thus the banquet scene was played for a maximum of statuesque groupings, swirling capes, a startlingly appearing and disappearing ghost; but the march on Dunsinane and the defeat of Macbeth were kept as colorless, schematic, and "let's get it over with" as possible—or a little more so. There was a good deal of unhelpful cutting as well as some positively disastrous writing in. Accordingly, Macbeth dies onstage: the entire army (a grand total of fifteen) watches, in a sporting tableau, as a heavily armed Macduff slaughters a bare-jerkined Macbeth, who then rolls on the ground and mutters "Blood! Blood!" as he

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looks at the murderous hands that slew Duncan. It is a fine piece of homespun philosophy, quite worthy of *Gorboduc* and Michael Benthall.

Benthall's imagination, in fact, ran, I mean, hobbled riot. Thus we had a shy postulant of a girl playing Fleance (by way of preparation, I assume, for Viola or Rosalind); a loutish youth in his twenties playing Macduff's son, giving that usually touching scene a unique blend of the Oedipal and the cretinous; a march on Dunsinane distinguished by not so much as a token of Birnam Wood in the shape of, say, a toothpick; a special choreography for sleepwalking which consists of scurrying like a mechanical mouse around corners, and then, in the straightaway, shifting gears into a dreamy, slow-motion glide; several apparitions sticking their heads out of the witches' cauldron like comic-strip missionaries being boiled for the cannibals' dinner; and so on.

But it is the performances that were particularly painful. Barbara Jefford's Lady Macbeth was a respectable, restrained clubwoman, quite uninspired, but, for all that, preferable to John Clements's Macbeth. Clements scooted and rattled through the part as though the whole thing were an after-dinner speech to a group of Veterans of World War One, but just a few times, to murther their sleep, springing a howl or scowl on them. In the "Tomorrow and tomorrow" soliloquy he did, however, reach certain heights—albeit comic ones. Thus he bellowed his indignation at his dead lady: "She should have died *hereafter!*" ("Damn her!" we almost heard), and roared again, as an afterthought: "Tomorrow!!" which, it seems, would have been the ideal time for her demise. Then, after a pause, came the remaining pair of "tomorrows" in a totally unrelated tone, starting out on a new tack. André Van Gyseghem's Duncan was a high-pitched, fussy old thing that, as far as I was concerned, couldn't have been dispatched soon enough, but I will say that I was amazed to learn that the old man had in him any blood whatever. As for Macduff, played by an American, William Sylvester, he walked through his part in a way which suggested that somnambulism might, unknown to medicine, be contagious, and received the news of his family's murder with a stoicism that can be described only as soporific. The high point here was when Malcolm (ably played by John Stride) had to exclaim "Macduff, this noble passion, etc." after a piece of diatribe from said nobleman that would not have dislodged a fly from his lips. The rest of the cast were, except for the fact that they spoke English, indistinguishable from what one sees at Stratford, Connecticut. Michael Annals's sets and costumes had their moments, but Tristram Cary's electronic beeps and proto-subliminal buzzes did not.

Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* was, however, a lively and original conception, which, up to a point, was genuinely interesting. Here was a Verona all faded terracotta (if terracotta can fade): a city that seemed to crumble before our very eyes and yet spread in all directions to blot out the sky, endless streets full of untidy, unruly life—

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everything etiolated, drab. This is what Zeffirelli the designer (with the help of Peter Hall's costumes) artfully designed for us, and this is what Zeffirelli the director skillfully populated with a verminous, pullulating life. Such occlusion and such dustiness would indeed shorten tempers, generate loutishness and its counterpart, fastidious nastiness. Under such circumstances, even Romeo must be a bit of a—however likable—oaf; even Juliet—however endearingly—a bit of a hoyden. For if they do not rush into love—angularly, bumblingly, desperately—it will be too late: by tomorrow they, too, might be corroded by the spiritual rust. After all, even Mercutio has become a charming but lewd loudmouth, even the worthy Paris has turned into an effeminate popinjay, the Duke himself is but a harassed bureaucrat dehumanized by his sticky job.

Scenes of violence, farce, youthful bumptiousness and clumsy charm (a balcony scene like a workout in a gym), against clever settings as if out of Renaissance manuals on stagecraft and in costumes that are utterly functional and self-effacing, these things carry us along swimmingly up to Act III, Scene 2. But just when the fiery-footed steeds of poetry should start galloping apace, Zeffirelli's conception begins to totter and, eventually, collapse around the heads of actors, audience, and playwright.

Already the first look into the program had made one anxious, as one read Signor Zeffirelli's program note. How would the concocter of sentences like "It is so difficult for a foreigner to believe that any but British and American people would be able to touch their own cultural heritage, especially with Shakespearian tradition" come to grips with the complex poetic music and frivolous wordplay of this dramatic poem? Well, for half the journey, admirably; but then! Was it that the actors could no longer backtrack from neo-realism into poetry? Or was it that the director did not permit it? Did the cumulative effect of a paunchy, prosaic Chorus, a calla lily-livered Paris, a male fishwife of a Capulet, and all those other churlish grotesques finally accomplish their attrition? Yes. And all those excesses of business that Zeffirelli's *verismo* and archness (blended in him as curiously as in his master, Visconti) appliquéd onto the action began to pall. It is clever for Mercutio to eat an apple through his Queen Mab speech, for Romeo to climb up a tree to Juliet's balcony, for Mercutio to be ignored while dying because no one thinks death can come of these street games and for the discovery to come all the more crushingly. It is resourceful for Romeo to welter on the floor of Friar Laurence's cell, for Juliet to assume that Romeo has already left her when he is actually still putting on his shoes behind her bed, and, again, for her almost not to notice his dead body as she is about to leave her tomb. But such devices are time-consuming. Hence the text must be cut mercilessly. The wedding preparations which so ominously turn into a funeral? Cut. Romeo's pathetic fight with Paris? A couple of words and one quick stab. The discovery of the dead lovers in the vault? Slurred over by people step-

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ping unceremoniously over Paris's corpse. The Friar's explanation of what happened? Cut. The reconciliation of the clans? Performed as if by push buttons. Despite John Stride's and Joanna Dunham's fetching acting, Romeo and Juliet became a pair of scissor-crossed lovers.

A pitiful phenomenon in the theatre is the persistence with which would-be playwrights keep belaboring the classics of fiction in the hope of turning them into viable drama. True, an unpretentious, commercial little novel can sometimes make a harmlessly mediocre little play; but why will people persist in thinking that masterpieces of fiction like *A Passage to India* and *The Aspern Papers* will triumphantly take the stage?

The arguments against it are painfully simple. A true work of art consists of the perfect interpenetration, indeed oneness, of content and form. If the matter had cried out to be a play, it would not have become a capital novel. Still, assuming that it could be recast, who could do it? The novelist himself—if he is also a playwright and willing to reconceive it completely—thus Giraudoux and Brecht. Another writer of equal genius? No, because a true artist will not, cannot submit to the rethinking, reliving, and rewriting of another man's experience. A lesser writer? He'll either just cut things down to size, and, as in the case of Santha Rama Rau's *Passage,* not even know what riches have been jettisoned (otherwise he would desist); or, like Michael Redgrave with *Papers,* he will be forced to pad, and his alien, inferior additions will produce a damask, eider-down pillow suddenly bulging and bristling with horsehair. It is, of course, different with film adaptations, where the screen adds several new dimensions and techniques in place of those the novel must lose, but the limitations of the stage necessitate amputation. To put it simply, a man who grows up to be 5′6″ will adapt himself to his somewhat limited stature, and be an unimpaired human being; but a man who was 6′5″ and is surgically reduced by a foot will not fare so well in life. Or let us put the argument even more empirically: can anyone name one single, solitary great novel that became a great play? Ever?

Ultimately, however, the proof is in the pudding, and there is no more puddingheaded dramaturgy around town than in *A Passage to India* and *The Aspern Papers.* In fact, I seriously doubt that either adaptation was leveled at the audiences (who seemed to me, in both cases, thoroughly bored), but only at the reviewers, whom one can always bamboozle with a sufficiently great novelist's name. And once the reviews have sold the play to the audience, the play can cheerfully sell the novel down the river.

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VERNON YOUNG

Of Night, Fire and Water

La Notte. The title is figurative and Antonioni's only abdication of subtlety in this almost perfect film derives from his fear that the metaphor isn't self-evident. (Twice he shows us a book entitled "The Sleepwalkers.") Half of the film takes place under hot, un-mysterious sunlight—in an International-Modern wilderness born yesterday—which accounts for much of the concealed terror one "hears," as if everything were moving through brightness toward catastrophe. Yet there's no catastrophe more crucial than what you see and hear as the sum of the details: the contemporary devaluation of life itself. For me, the most sinister aspect of Southern California was always the mocking consolation of its blanched surface; what one sensed there as a sleeping fury under or beyond the stuccoed villas, the regimental palms and the malted-milk dispensaries, was really *nothingness,* no vibration whatever from a living past or a vital present. On the American scene the best literary demonstration I can recall of a spirit-of-place so negative it seems a threat is in *The Great Gatsby,* where Fitzgerald captured with lasting accuracy the savagely hot and seedy weekends of billboarded Long Island in the Twenties. (Nabokov does quite well with the same sort of thing in *Lolita.*) And this is the principal note in the Milano of Antonioni's film: a humid, muffling *nothingness* punctuated by terrible sounds toward which we're normally heedless but here suggest a Last Judgment we've already had—metallic taunts from the engineering world, a short-wave signal, a distant siren, a jet-plane, a make-believe hydrogen bomb set off in a vacant lot.

Giovanni and Lidia drive up to the hospital (uninflected architecture, willfully devoid of "reminiscent detail"). Antonioni cuts from their dying friend, Tommaso, to the bucket of a motorized shovel which collapses, out of control, in the path of the arriving car. Tommaso's impending death further opens the breach that's patently corroding the ten-years-married couple. As they leave the hospital, after giving futile comfort, a nymphomaniac patient, wild with hunger, detains Giovanni. The scene is a glimpse of hell strong enough almost to destroy you before the film is under way and it features another of those telling cuts: from the black-gowned girl starkly placed against a sheer white wall to the waiting Lidia, crying over Tommaso, also centered in a harsh-light frame of the hospital's facade.

Heat, choking traffic, a man dying sooner than he thinks, love as a disease or a dying fall in a too-familiar melody. In a sequence no less fabulous, if shorter, than the aimless island search of *L'Avventura* (the measured *andante,* now a signature of the Antonioni art), Lidia, estranged and restless, walks the city alone—to reassure herself that she's

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enticing; she conjures only a wolf-whistle and the juvenile barbarism of back-street life. At a cabaret, she and Giovanni try again. She tries too hard. She bores him, knows that she bores him, can't restrain herself from boring him, while Giovanni stares at without seeing the eurhythmic orgy of the two black dancers, performed automatically and to scant applause. "Life would be simpler if one didn't think," he tells Lidia, a delusive cliché apparently inspired but certainly not supported by the dancers, whose simplicity is that of performing animals. I was reminded of the hired, tired couple in the ocean liner's salon of Bunin's "Gentleman from San Francisco," re-enacting, ad infinitum, their two-step charade of sensual love as the ship bears its secret corpse into the storm and the oncoming night. . . . And so to the party, at the industrialist's country villa, an opulent well-lighted place, with cityscapes of another vintage illustrating the wall-paper, and a checkerboard floor (enduring motif in painting since the 15th century) clean enough to eat, and to play games, on. The guests are not the depraved, or lost, international set of *La Dolce Vita:* they're a parvenu crowd (with no suspicion that they're lost), rich enough to look smart, sufficiently cultivated to shake the hand of a conversation without wringing it, easy to spend an evening with if you expect nothing. Expecting nothing is their particular hell but only Valentina, the host's daughter, coached and modelled for better things, is articulate on this subject.

The oppression of the day is translated into a torrential rain, a cue for the guests to jump, fully clothed, into the swimming pool—a fashionable aphrodisiac. Only for Lidia is it a trial by water. Since Tommaso, who loved her, unrequited, has died at the hospital and Giovanni seems dangerously engrossed by Valentina, Lidia thinks to find vindictive release in a quick affair with a previous suitor; they drive to his place through a blackening downpour, photographed as if travelling through a tunnel of oblivion. Emerging, at the other end, she's purged: as completely as she had been earlier, after walking the Milano streets, subconsciously invoking outrage. She's too old for vengeance in the hay, or too virtuous because too wise. Long after midnight, she has already turned into a pumpkin. Meanwhile, Giovanni and Valentina have mutually exposed and killed *their* tender illusions: the timing is wrong, they're too clear-sighted to believe, Giovanni has published too many sincere words in fiction to sound convincing as a suitor. So the three come to an "understanding" and no one of them is happy with it. Valentina puts out the standing-lamp with her foot (one of those marvellous, absently decisive gestures of Monica Vitti, who has an ingratiating loose-limbed gift for using her hands and legs as if she weren't sure they belong to her): she may well become a Claudia *(L'Avventura),* reconciled with ruins.

Giovanni and Lidia drift away with the night, over a lawn where the negro dance band still fumbles with desultory syncopation, to the golf preserves beyond. (In a remarkable number of European films, negroid

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music pipes society to its doom.) The party's over: what follows is a coda or, if you judge the film from a strictly formal standpoint, an anti-climax—yet indispensable. Lidia, as of old, importunes Giovanni (he doesn't love her, she's a burden to him, he should have accepted the industrialist's offer in order to be "free"), trying for the thousandth perilous time, while wanting him, to prove how little *he* wants her. Seated on the grass, she reads him an old love-letter which, for too long to be plausible, he doesn't recognize as his own to her! When he does, overcome with remorse or re-aroused by his own prose, he embraces his wife fiercely, desperately, trying to assuage her doubt, trying to persuade himself. As they agonizingly cling to one another, she repudiating his love but wanting to believe, the camera's departing movement reveals that they're struggling in a sand trap, and our terminal view is of the pastorale beyond, hillocks in the middle distance, another bunker—another hazard to play through.

Whatever else the art of the film has achieved it has rarely before now found as pure an equivalent of the *zeitgeist,* in *cinematic* language, as poets, painters and novelists have, for a half-century, in theirs. The scenic art of Antonioni, in its late perfection, was concealed for years in a few lines of T. S. Eliot: "Where shall the word be found, where will the word/Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence/ Not on the sea or on the islands, not/ On the mainland, in the desert or the rain-land. . . ." And in *La Notte* the heartless pavements and buildings, spiritual equivalents of the volcanic shores and islands of *L'Avventura,* are made to express what Worringer has called "that uncanny pathos which attaches to the animation of the inorganic," first discovered visually in our time by another Italian, Giorgio de Chirico. It seems a pity that Italian cities (even Milano), not, after all, deficient in architectural heritage, should be enlisted as microcosms of our debilitated era. But Italian directors have a finer conscience than others. The vitality of this conscience and of their art for re-enacting it almost contradicts the social conclusions implied in the films themselves. To be sure, Antonioni principally concerns himself with the Dispirited Classes. Which suggests to this writer a challenging comparison: Bergman's characters in *Through A Glass Darkly* exist in a world without pigment not because they've been artistically created to exemplify exhausted communication, but because they're provincial. They have nothing to communicate, and have been approved on these grounds by the Swedish audience. "They're so typically Swedish" is the common refrain here,[1] and no critic has been struck by any serious distinction between Bergman's lifeless treatment and the compassionate culture of Antonioni. (*L'Avventura* and *Through A Glass Darkly* opened the same week: both, be it noted, deal with very few people in a remote setting). Antonioni's sleepwalkers are dying in a pocket of a sanguine culture and he *cares* about them! So do we, therefore—materially as-

[1] I am writing this review from Stockholm.

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sisted by the lovely Monica Vitti and the beautiful (not attractive) Jeanne Moreau—astute, morose, exuding Style from head to foot—who is always giving one of the Best Performances of the year.

By reference to the motion picture, alone, you might conclude that only the Italians are deeply ashamed of our civilisation. . . . There's at least one Spaniard who has moved, in our time, from nauseated anger to a burning disdain. The measurable distance between the surrealist films made by Luis Bunuel thirty years ago in Paris (with the still unspecified assistance of Senor Dali) and the art of *Viridiana* (1961) spans a distinction between chaos asserted *not,* indeed, for its own sake but in an infuriated attempt to vilify chaos, itself, and chaos represented in terms of a vandalised historical value to which Bunuel, during the interim, had paid little overt respect. Despite the fond reiterations of a Bunuel cult (to the members of which, we may be sure, the subject himself would give short shrift) that every Bunuel film has been either a masterpiece or a manifesto, in some way, of the master's touch, the truth of the matter has qualifiable proportions. Bunuel has been an uneven film-director making uncertain progress toward an unknown objective which none the less demanded from him terrible risks of life, limb and taste in order to confront the objective and express it in his own irreducible idiom once (or if lucky, twice) for all. The aim had a beast in view and barriers of self-indulgence and easy exploitation on the way. One can't deny a consistent sado-masochistic vein in Bunuel's films, frequently gratuitous—a recourse, within commercial assignments, to the props of cruelty without adequate reason for displaying them. But at his creative best, which I prefer to marvel at, Bunuel's sadism is not, *au fond,* of that salacious order to which Clouzot is prone. Clouzot is an entertainer, one step above Hitchcock. Bunuel is a poet, one step above Georges Franju, and the mention of Franju helps me to understand Bunuel in a special direction.

It's my intuitive belief that Bunuel is one of those vulnerable souls to whom the indignity of the universal scene is so overwhelming that his only protection, against madness or paralysis, is to construct images of the indignity. This *is,* by definition, a sadistic strategy, for it chooses to retain the hated object in effigy rather than to eliminate it; also by definition it's one form of art! The condition is a perilous one, since it tends to produce monsters as unmanageable as those that inspired it and may well lead the unwary artist into the domain of the ridiculous. Bunuel has made some ridiculous films. But he made *Los Olvidados* (1950) which should have been called *Il Grito,* and he has made *Viridiana,* which will be called many things. Franju said of Clouzot that he had the wrong approach, he tried to *punch* people's heads off: "one should *twissst* them off!" Franju enjoys posing as an *enfant terrible;* you have only to see the two fantasy-horror films he has lately made (beside *La Tête Contre Mur*) and you realize that to a degree like

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Bunuel (his own favorite director) he is a haunted soul who has sometimes donned the apron of a butcher. Resemblance, for the present, stops there. Bunuel is also a visionary.

And *Viridiana,* without Franju's Grand-Guignol tactics, has already twisted off many heads. Bunuel made the film in Spain—that's Miracle Number One, from whichever viewpoint you regard it. (Political liberals who lay claim to Bunuel never acknowledge that his incisive regional documentary, *Land Without Bread,* was banned in Spain by the *Republic;* furthermore, that government worked hard to prevent the film's distribution elsewhere. It was released in France, 1932.) Shrewd pessimist, he managed to make two versions of *Viridiana;* while one was confiscated, as he must have foreseen, the other was in France and before you could say *misericordia* had shared the Grand Prize at Cannes, been repudiated thereafter by the French authorities to propitiate Franco, no doubt, condemned by the Vatican's official journal, restrained and frowned upon at Bonn (as of April '62 I don't know what its subsequent fate may be in West Germany), and greeted with raised oars in the Liberal press of Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden, an acclaim quite as odd as its condemnation. From what I read or deciphered in the Brussels and Zurich papers I infer a general agreement with Stockholm's Jorn Donner, who saw only that the film was anti-clerical and believes, evidently, that Jorge is a kind of New-Deal hero. If that's the fools' paradise filmgoers want to live in I'd rather not disturb their complacency. But I can't honor Bunuel by misconstruing his film as an ode to the brave new world when it's so succinctly, among other poetic things, an inversion of Lincoln Steffens' oracular epigram —"I have seen the Future, and it stinks."

Before offering some "program notes" on the film's principal action, I want to insist on Miracle Number Two: *Viridiana* is a mordantly beautiful movie, however you add up its argument. No estimate of Bunuel as a *filmmaker* will ever be more than provisional which doesn't try to account for his inconsistent levels of execution; he seems to be extraordinarily dependent on his cinematographer and cutter, and perhaps at the mercy of his own disposition. *Nazarin,* made barely two years before *Viridiana,* was unbelievably ponderous; it might have been directed by King Vidor in 1925. *Viridiana* is a work of complete assurance. Despite the ferocity of its indictments and the unbearably vivid portraits it includes, the film has a remarkably dispassionate style and is incredibly sustained at an *allegro moderato* pace. Jose F. Aguayo (on the camera) should be conceded a large share of the credit. Impressively he repeats a smooth arc-panning movement, closed by an abrupt pulling back or a lunge forward. In commonplace terms it's just a syncopated right-angled motion but in context it has often the effect of a tango: slide, step-step-step-step, hesitate, dip, repeat with variations. (I'm not predicating an intention, only a felt analogy.)

The film has three distinct parts or movements in its development.

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I. Majestic introductory passages of Handel's "Alleluia" chorus. Viridiana (viridian, i.e. green—springlike, virginal) reluctantly interrupts novitiate to visit aging uncle, Don Jaime. The grandee lives alone, saving housekeeper and gardeners, on a neglected country estate. Sequence introduced by housekeeper's little girl skipping rope with unconsciously spectacular dexterity. Don Jaime summons the past with ecclesiastical music, fondles the trousseau of the wife he never possessed (she died on the wedding night), tries to persuade Viridiana to forgo her vows and replace the wife she resembles. The novice, beautiful and untouched, graciously refuses all carnalities, is afraid to milk the cow, sleeps on nails, treasures a crown of thorns, walks in her sleep and throws into the fire the knitting she has begun, brings ashes to her bed. To indulge her uncle before leaving, she dresses in the wife's bridal clothes and Don Jaime, after drugging her with the help of the housekeeper, tries to make love to her (accompaniment—Mozart's "Requiem") and re-arouse his sleeping passion, witnessed by the ubiquitous child of the housekeeper. He is incapable of completing the indelicacy but tells Viridiana she has given herself to him and must therefore renounce the convent and stay with him. Her outraged reaction is so excessive as to break down his lie, and she leaves without forgiving him. Faced with insupportable isolation, Don Jaime performs a final calculated mischief: he divides the estate between Viridiana and his unacknowledged son, Jorge, before hanging himself—with the skipping rope.

II. Viridiana sets up a hostelry for the "poor," to the wry amusement of Jorge, a personable if slack-mannered young man who claims he would have been an architect if he had been given the chance. He has a mistress he's ready to discard for Viridiana, whom he tolerates, or for the inherited housekeeper of whom at first he's scarcely aware. Viridiana's miscreants are given prayer and self-expression: led by an evil blind man, they conspicuously feature a cripple who purports to be a religious painter and a scabby hanger-on accused by the others of being a leper (he is offended and insists that he's syphilitic). Jorge sets his own contingent to the useful work of patching up.

The climax is engineered by the absence from the villa of Jorge and Viridiana, with their housekeeper. The "guests" take over, drag out the ancestral linens and glass, stage a swilling, guzzling, food-throwing banquet, while the Handel oratorio from the phonograph washes over them in an unfelt wave. The "Leper" does a fandango, wearing the corset and bridal veil of the dead woman; the assembled company poses for its picture, miming "The Last Supper" (the Leonardo composition), presided over by the blind man and "snapped" by a gipsy from between her legs as she throws high her skirts. Crescendo of abandon: flamencan dance as natively skilled as the girl's rope-jumping, incongruity of Handel ignored. A couple fornicates behind the couch and the blind man, frustrated in his attempt to chastise them, smashes everything

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within reach of his stick. All but the "Artist" and the "Leper" stagger out: this pair investigates the bedroom after the "Artist" has picked up the skip-rope with which to support his pants. Jorge and Viridiana arrive as the belching blind man gropes his exit with the bridal veils clinging to his legs. Housekeeper returns to town for help. Jorge is knocked out and tied up by the "Leper" and the "Artist"; the latter overpowers Viridiana in order to rape her. Last image in this passage: her hand convulsively grasping the wooden handle of the skip-rope which distinctly resembles the cow's teat of the earlier episode. . . . Jorge comes to, promises to enrich the "Leper" if he'll kill the "Artist." With a satisfied grin, the lazzarone beats his compadre to death with a small fireplace shovel and as he retrieves his payment from the cupboard (probably the housekeeping allowance for the month) the Guardia Civil arrives.

III. Epilogue—Evening after the Morning After? Order has been restored. Jorge is having the estate cleaned up and wired. Viridiana's impedimenta is bonfired but before cutting to the finale there's a shot of the crown of thorns being salvaged and burning brightly. Viridiana now waits on the pleasure of Jorge: she knocks at the parlor door before entering and her eyes are softly shining with desire. The housekeeper is ensconced as Jorge's mistress and the three sit at the same table to play cards through the winter nights which are approaching. There's music, too. Handel has been replaced by rock-'n-roll. The lyric message tantalizes the orchard (as camera swiftly back-tracks into the night)—worded, as nearly as I can recall:

> Be she fat or be she thin
> I don' care what shape she's in—
> Shake, shake oh shake yo' cares away! *(Repeat refrain).*

Questioned by a *Paris-Match* representative, Bunuel affected surprise at the international furore over his film. *Viridiana* was only a treatment of certain poetic ideas, he explained, and why, he asked, should its locale be taken for Spain rather than Mexico, for instance? These are suave equivocations by a veteran of censure and censorship. Of no avail, to protest against the undying papal tradition which accuses those who depict blasphemy as being themselves blasphemers! And whatever particularities of recent *Spanish* history the film no doubt reveals (I suspect there are many to be gleaned by the *aficionado)* they are but decoys or a lower-court inquisition. The happy heathen who have rejoiced in their discovery that if the Church and the Nobility fail to humanize each other their fate is suicide and rape have only gone halfway with the film. (Bunuel provides no easy encouragement to their animosities: Don Jaime and Viridiana are by no means unsympathetically portrayed.) What happens in *Viridiana* is what has been happening to Europe in our time. The remains of our magnificent, sinful culture are being kicked to death by the inheritors—and the provenance of Jorge,

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the New Executive, should be obvious: he smokes cigars, will sleep with or bribe anybody, is an enterprising mortician and partial to Africa-Modern music.

None the less, *Viridiana is* a poem—for what the term is approximately worth—and while I'm obviously prepared to insist on its historical pertinence I'd be more gratified if I thought I had urged the reader to look and receive before sweating to "understand." Bunuel's images are their own reward. . . . Bunuel, the man, demands no other—even less. Two years ago a *Sight and Sound* critic asked him if he were anxious for the fate of his *L'Age D'Or* (the single remaining print is perishing). Interviewers spur Bunuel into provocative answers: he expressed the fervent wish that the film in question would vanish altogether, adding that for himself he wanted a like fate—he hopes to be cremated so that he'll leave on this earth not a trace. . . . Say this for the Spaniard. He knows how to live on a plateau beyond self-justification or disgust. *Viridiana* will be Bunuel's clearest trace—for a wink of time, at any rate.

Antonioni and Bunuel can't, as stylists or as individuals, be profitably compared. Compassion, the master-feeling of Antonioni where his characters are the object of our experience, is irrelevant to the purpose of sardonic allegory. Perhaps the two directors have an affinity, however, in their Latin-European conviction that the fall of valor is not a solecism to be lightly shrugged off. . . . As artists, each has offered hostages to victory. Compassion and ruthlessness are dedicated attitudes for which satisfying artistic solutions are almost equally difficult. A lethal weapon is no easier to shape than a memorial urn: Bunuel's took years for its tempering. . . . The forging of a Toledo blade was a ceremony fraught with anxiety and imminent mishap at every stage, requiring, beside the correct wedding of sand and water, the propitious season, hour and prayer. Paul Horgan has described the creative conditions in an impressive passage of a rich book (*Great River,* 1954).

> The blades were born only in the darkest nights, the better to let the true or false temper of the steel show when red-hot; and of the darkest nights, only those when the south wind blew, so that in passing the blade from fire to water it might not cool too rapidly as a north wind would cool it.

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JOSEPH BENNETT

The Destruction of the Lucanians[1]

WHAT IS THE MUSIC of these voices? Rich southern sounds, operatic, flood the soundtrack. A mother, and five sons. The lips move, of the actors—two Greek, two French, only one Italian. The depth and pungency of southern sound, the startling beauties, phonetic and metaphorical, of the dialect. The work is *musical*. It is *sung* to a hidden rhythm, in one of the most imaginative of Mediterranean speeches, the Basilicata-Lucanian.

Of the sounds, those given to Rocco are the most delicate and poignant. Ciro's are twangy, vibrant in the most extreme form of southernness, virile and deep. Vincé speaks rhythmically, with a drawl. The mother's voice is more Gian-Carlo Menotti, more traditionally hysterical, operatic. The musical underlining is heavy, integral, dense. Nino Rota's score constantly saws away, pushing at the plot.

These voices of Basilicata, with the harrowingly mythopoeic nature of the dialect itself, produce a staggering effect. The South, that stricken land, of frightful rock, frightful clarity, has yielded up the voices of the tutelary Italiot divinities, pre-Greek, pre-Phoenician, pre-Olympian.

Here is a myth, of Pelasgian utterance, in a modern orientation. It concerns the destruction of the blood link, the mythic blood tie, of the archetypal patriarchal unit which exists today in the South, unchanged since pre-history, untouched by the invasions of the Achaean Greeks, much less their Turinese successors. Dostoyevskyan in its surface aspects and in its salients of violence, this drama moves in a world where the blood tie turns in on itself; destroys itself; the world of the ancients. The psychic world, in short, of Aeschylus in the *Oresteia*.

The poetic richness of the Basilicata dialect *creates* the myth, *creates* its setting. The lips of the beautiful French and Greek actors move; out from their lips, almost but never quite matched to their mouths, comes an anthologized torrent of sounds from an area bordered roughly by Taranto on the east, Salerno and Melfi on the north, Calabria on the south, and the Tyrrhenian on the west.[2]

"Africa? Africa?" asks an old woman in the housing compound in the Lambrate quarter of Milan where the family takes its first subterranean refuge in the North.

1 *ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS*. Directed by Luchino Visconti. Story by Luchino Visconti, Vasco Pratolini, Suso Cecchi D'Amico. Screenplay by Luchino Visconti, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Pasquale Festa Campanile, Massimo Franciosa, Enrico Medioli. Music by Nino Rota. Director of Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno. Suggested in part by the collection *The Bridge of Ghisolfa*, by Giovanni Testori. Produced by Goffredo Lombardo. With Renato Salvatori, Alain Delon, Max Cartier and Spiros Focas as the brothers. And with Annie Girardot, Katina Paxinou, Roger Hanin, Paolo Stoppa, Claudia Cardinale, and Suzy Delair. Vocal by Elio Mauro.

2 The film was shot without sound. Voices were dubbed in later; in the case of the Italian actors only, the voices of the actors themselves were used.

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"No, Lucania!" replies the old hag of a concierge, pointing downwards with her finger: "In fondo! In fondo!" They laugh. From down south, no-goods, *terroni, meridionali.*

And the City—which is Milan, New York, Brussels, London, Melbourne, Dusseldorf—destroys them, destroying an *archetype* of the patriarchal blood-link which was the fundament of our dying Mediterranean civilization. From the world of Aeschylus to the neon (*luce Americana*) and the juke-boxes of the industrial peripheries, where live our New Americans.

These are *Lucani* (Lucanians), from the ancient province of Basilicata, the province of the *Basilikos,* or viceroy, of the Greek empire. The transition is made in nineteen hours, from the station of Metapontum, on the wooden benches of the Bari-Milan *diretto,* the classic train of the *terroni,* crawling interminably up the Adriatic coast until it crosses over to Milan on the fast Bologna-Parma line, arriving shortly after sunset. The small, dark father, dead, stares from the totemic family photograph and the funeral-brooch on the widow's breast. The mother is matriarch; after twenty-five years of obedience to the authority of her husband, she has mustered her four sons up to the North to join a fifth, the eldest, who has a laborer's job. Of the sons, it is Rocco who has left the hard and unyielding family plot of land with the greatest unwillingness.

This peasant's son resembles the son of a landowner well known to readers of Dostoyevsky:

> Alyosha was at this time a well-grown, red-cheeked, clear-eyed lad of nineteen, radiant with health. He was very handsome, too, graceful, moderately tall, with hair of a dark brown, with a regular, rather long, oval-shaped face, and wide-set, dark-grey, shining eyes; he was very thoughtful, and apparently very serene . . . no doubt, in the monastery, he fully believed in miracles.

To realize this description with exactitude Visconti cast Alain Delon, a Frenchman, as Rocco—at some cost in terms of his skinniness, which makes him only the unreal shadow of the boxing champion he is supposed to be. But this actor fits the description-recipe uncannily. Delon, a flaccid and characterless actor in himself,[3] has been not directed here, but *hypnotized* ruthlessly and relentlessly. Visconti, working with formless clay, has projected himself, his own conception of Rocco, through a passive subject, a passive adolescent medium. For Rocco, too, Visconti has provided a dulcet, serene voice, all the beauties of dialect, the voice of poetry, of myth, of the past; tranquil, poignant and suffering. Rocco-Alyosha dreams of his homeland to the prostitute (Annie Girardot, French; dubbed-in also). In this Civitavecchia outdoor cafe scene the timbre of sainthood is communicated by Visconti through the pitching of a voice, the movements of the hands. Innocence dreams in

[3] Cf. René Clément's technicolored *Plein Soleil,* released in the U. S. as *Purple Noon,* in which Delon is billed as "the French James Dean."

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on itself. Musical and visual means; *vocal*—speech, dialect, tones—above all.

Rocco-Alyosha's words are poems; he brings oranges; he eats fresh eggs; he drinks the hot coffee like a grateful animal when the snow falls; he wears his mother's vest. He sings folklore while cleaning lentils: *Maria Donata, / Che be' fiore questa; / Ti vorrei dare baccia / Sulla punta della nusu*[4]; the brothers kiss the mother's hand when they leave to earn money by shoveling snow. Rocco's sacrifice to the family, to the South, to the ancestral blood-link, is total: his earnings, his love (for the prostitute), his life in the degradation of the boxing-champion career which he detests. "To Brussels-London-Melbourne" he will go, farthest of any of the brothers; he who loved Basilicata above all else, the simple homeland, the stricken rocks.

Rocco's greatest poem is saved for the end, at the victory toast:

ROCCO: *Verrà un giorno*
Ma cert' è ancora lontano
Ca tornerò a paese
E forse se non sarà possibile per me
Forse qualcun'altro di noi pùo tornare nella nostra terra
(to youngest:)
Forse te, Luca.
LUCA: *E cu te che ci voglio tornare.*
(Ciro shifts uneasily, with his two pals from the Alfa-Romeo assembly line.)
ROCCO: *Ricordati, Luca,*
U paese mie è un paese d'ulivi,
Du mal da luna,
U paese d'arcobaleni.
(to the oldest, a construction worker:)
Ti ricordi Vincé
Un capomastro quando comincia una casa
Gett' un petra sull'ombra della prima persona che passa.
LUCA: *Perchè?*
ROCCO: *Perchè ci vuole un sacrificio*
Perchè la casa venga su solida.[5]

The camera switches to the photograph of the other brother, Simone, his jaw being smashed by a boxing-glove fist, showing him as a sacri-

[4] "Maria Donata, / What a beautiful flower you are; / I want to kiss you / On the tip of your nose."

[5] ROCCO: A day will come / But for certain it is still far off / When I will go back home / And perhaps if it will not be possible for me / Perhaps some other one of us can go back to our land. / Perhaps you, Luca.

LUCA: It is with you that I want to go back.

ROCCO: Remember Luca, / My homeland is a country of olive trees / Of the moonbeams / A country of the rainbows.

Do you remember, Vincé? / A masterbuilder, when he begins a house, / Throws a stone at the shadow of the first who passes by.

LUCA: Why?

ROCCO: Because a sacrifice is wanted / So that the house may come up solidly.

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fice to the City, to modern life. But it is also Rocco who is the sacrifice, not merely to the City, but to the past, to the Mediterranean archetypes.

"Arance! Arance, Amèlia, delle nostre parte!" He brings oranges, Rocco does, to the North, the Maltese blood-orange, on the train from the Gulf of Taranto, from the Ionian Sea, the "Greek" sea of "Greek" (Byzantine) Basilicata, where are the ruins of Metapontum on the coast.

Rocco has his musical theme; Elio Mauro's vocal to Nino Rota's score is synthetic in the best sense, evoking the dialect songs still sung in Basilicata and Calabria, on the theme of absence from home; from the hearth:

Vai. Vai.
Quant' grann' u munnu
La strada lung' assai
Non vi lo sunu
Bello paese mi'ĕ
Addu so nat'ĕ
U cuore mi'ĕ cu te
La g'e lasciat'ĕ[6]

The brothers, Rocco and Simone, are both in love with a prostitute, superbly played by Annie Girardot with overtones, especially in the *chemin de fer* scene, of the Giulietta Masina of *Cabiria*. The City, in the form of the prostitute, bursts in upon the Lucanian family in their subterranean refuge.

Simone invokes the Lucanian blood-tie, of elder brother to younger, to degrade Rocco's virginal love of the prostitute with a rape, and a beating of the defenseless Rocco, paralyzed Alyosha-like by the presence of evil and his respect for the senior brother's authority under the ancient code.[7] Simone has rejected Lucania in his first boxing match,

[6] How wide is the world, / The road is very long / I am not there / My homeland is beautiful / Where I was born / My heart with you / I have left.

[7] This episode, and the relationship between Simone and Rocco, was suggested by "Cosa fai, Sinatra?", one of the sequences in Giovanni Testori's collection of tales, *Il Ponte della Ghisolfa*, which deals with violence among working-class youths in the industrial peripheries of Milan. Much of the dialogue in the rape-beating scene is taken direct from Testori, as well as Simone's assistants, Riguttini and Camisasca, and his counselor in corruption, Ivo Ballabio, nicknamed "Il Brianza," a bartender, smuggler, blackmailer and chief actor-protagonist in pornographic films. Ivo is given an important role in Visconti's *Rocco*. In the Testori tale, the brothers are the second and third sons of five children of a widow, whose married eldest son has gone to work in Belgium. The second brother, head of the family, with his hard-won earnings pays for the training of the third brother's career as a popular crooner, from whence the nickname "Sinatra." "Sinatra" has a sexless relationship with a former whore of his brother Attilio's; the primacy of the elder is thus affronted. Attilio surprises Sinatra and rapes the girl in his presence, ripping off her panties to throw them at Sinatra. But Sinatra is totally unconcerned, saunters off to a juke-box bar. Later Attilio reproaches and beats Sinatra for lack of virility, lack of combativeness, and lack of respect.

Visconti included the ripping off of the prostitute's panties and Simone's throwing them at Rocco: "Bah, take these and kiss them if you have the courage. You only know how to make love with these things here, these underpants." This was cut out of the three-hour-U. S. version. Of the four cuts made for U. S. consumption, this was by far the most damaging to the total impression.

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fighting under the colors of "Aurora Milano—for Lombardy" against "Virtùs (virtue-strength) of Potenza—for Lucania." Simone, having failed as a boxer, receives the fatal phrase of rejection from Rocco himself: *Mi fai schifo* (you disgust me). Driven wild by these words, Simone turns merciless, beats his brother. But Rocco will not defend himself against the authority of the family and the homeland, which is the polarity of his sainthood.

Mi fai schifo!—You disgust me!—is hurled once again at Simone's head by the moneyed retired boxing-champion, Duilio, intuitively rendered by the fine French actor Roger Hanin. Duilio Morini (Testori's "Il ras" from the *Il Ponte della Ghisolfa* collection), the City in another form, lures Simone into the boxing game, knowing the boy has no real talent, sponsoring him, softening him. He waits for Simone's final defeat; then buys him contemptuously, destroying him with the twice-fatal formula: *Mi fai schifo.* Once again the formula drives Simone to violence, disappointed even in his hope for sympathy and acceptance from this dubious money-source of the City. Simone is beaten into submission with ease by the experienced boxing-champion.

Finally Simone proposes a new life, a new hope, to the prostitute, to save them both. "Why are you trembling, why are you scared?" he asks her by the deserted autumn lake.[8] *"—Amore—amore mio"* he begs her, plaintively. But his primitive, disheveled Lucanian aspect terrifies her, and he, who as the "Aurora" (Dawn) of Milan had defeated the "Virtùs" (Virtue) of Lucania for Lombardy in his first match, is rejected *for the third time* by the City with the same maddening words: *"Mi fai schifo."* And sacrificed at last he draws the knife for a scene which is operatic only insofar as its unbearable nature enjoys the benefit of the long succession of musical voices and phrasing that has come before.

It is difficult to put into words the impassioned nature of Renato Salvatori's playing of Simone; to say that he is here an actor of genius is to miss the point: Simone has *consumed* him. In a gallery of flawless performances, his is the gem; there is not a gesture, not a word, that is not inspired, in three hours of relentless screen exposure. I would select the moment when Salvatori utters the words *"È sangue; è sangue"* (it is blood) as the top point of the performance, when he discloses to Rocco that he has murdered the prostitute.

The rape scene, the beating of Rocco, the knifing scene, and the Grand Opera of the family's shrieking finale of grief have all been

[8] This is the Lago di Fogliano, on the seacoast near Latina, transformed to the Idroscalo (airport lake) of Milan at Linate by the addition of false street lights. Cunning legal maneuvers by the impenetrably bourgeois *meneghini* civic fathers prevented the use of the true Idroscalo, on the grounds that the film was immoral. A later lawsuit required that the Lucanian family name be changed from "Pafundi" to "Parondi" after the film had been completed: this was effected through ingenious tape and film editing. Objections to the name "Rocco" were overcome when it was pointed out that it had been selected in memory of the late Lucanian peasant-poet, the socialist mayor of Tricarico, Rocco Scotellaro, author of *Contadini del Sud* and *L'Uva Putanella,* works, incidentally, of great peasant candor and charm.

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slightly cut.[9] Not much more than two minutes of the total film have been taken from the version shown in Venice in 1960; it is still virtually impossible to watch the knife-scene without turning the eyes away from the screen. Nevertheless, the operatic nature of Visconti's intentions is blurred by this deletion of the four summits of the four highest points along the film's emotional graph, a graph written with wavering seismographic needles of tension, with spasms of outcry above wriggling lines and valleys; the film is a magical projection of La Scala in Dostoyevskyan terms. The story of the Lucanian family is a "passion" in every sense.

In Italy, the film was divided into four chapters, each introduced by one of the brothers, following his point of view along the narrative.[10] After Vincenzo, Simone and Rocco, it is the turn of Ciro, the smallest and youngest, played by the Frenchman Max Cartier.[11] Cartier is an unbelievably perfect physical duplicate of the small, round-headed Italiot-Pelasgian Lucanian type. To him has been assigned the deepest, most guttural of the orchestrated southern voices. *Io non fumo,* he utters, in a machine-gun beady bass, from the very bottom of his throat, hurling at least *his* triumph over the prostitute who has asked him for a cigarette. She, the City personified, having ruined two of his brothers.

As a skilled worker assembling cylinder blocks at the Alfa-Romeo factory, Ciro has conquered the City on its own terms. Ciro, too, has the last word in the film, in the "Luca" epilogue, rejecting Lucania. Ciro foresees a future of hope for the specialized factory worker in an industrial democracy, for himself, for Luca, for all who can qualify. Visconti has said that Ciro speaks, at the end, for him in the film.[12]

[9] In the three-hour U. S. version. A version, playing slightly under two hours, currently in U. S. neighborhood theatres, has been horribly mutilated and criminally deformed. Don't see it.

[10] A Prologue, "The Mother," describes the home-village between Bernalda and the ruins of ancient Metapontum on the coast of Magna Graecia, and the sea-burial of the father on this coast, this "Greek" sea. This was eliminated from the shooting script, but an Epilogue, entitled "Luca" after the child brother, remains in the finished film.

[11] A gymnast and *type sportif,* without previous acting experience, selected by Visconti.

[12] Ciro's speech in the epilogue recapitulates that of 'Ntoni Valastro at the end of *La Terra Trema* (1948), in foreseeing a future of hope and progress through working-class unity and goodwill ('Ntoni: "Verrà un giorno in cui tutti capiranno che avevo ragione . . etc.") *La Terra Trema* was Visconti's radically altered plot-treatment of Verga's classic *I Malavoglia,* shot in the Malavoglia village of Aci Trezza, using only native fishermen for actors. Subtitled "Episodio del mare," it was to be the first of the three episodes in *La Terra Trema,* which was planned as a Sicilian trilogy. The second episode, "della miniera," was to take place among unemployed sulfur miners; the hero Cataldo was to organize his fellow-miners into a cooperative and work the abandoned mine. The third episode, "della terra," was to take place on a *latifondo* landed estate; the peasant hero Saracino was to organize the serfs to fight the mafia terror organization of the landlords. Visconti, however, has indicated that *Rocco* is to take the place of the second episode, and has implied that a third episode will follow the successful fortunes of an enterprising southern emigrant like Ciro, in a city like Milan, using again the family organism, as with the Valastros in *La Terra Trema,* and the Parondis in *Rocco.*

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The pat answer of Ciro the factory worker is too conditioned a response, too much a convention of our times, to be taken at face value. From our perspective in America we can see, as well, that the Italians are experiencing only today the consumer-goods-boom phase of the industrial revolution which we first experienced forty years ago, in the 1920's; at that time too, the mass-produced automobile industry, on which Ciro's hopes are based, seemed the solution to all our problems. *The Lucanians have been destroyed. And nothing has taken their place.*

Dulled and brutalized with our phoney Joan of Arcs and Thomas à Beckets, the stilted or ridiculously colloquial concoctions of Shaw, of Anouilh, of Eliot, we have forgotten that the saint can be a hero, can act with verisimilitude. How did Visconti, then, do it? Alyosha as a warrior, a boxer; an unwilling St. Michael, St. George?

It was a stroke of pure luck: the demographic phenomenon existed, it was *actual:* the ancient patriarchal Mediterranean society, with all its stark rigors, was only nineteen hours away by train— on the Ionian Sea—from the prostitute, the modern City. At the Central Station one can still see them twice a day debouching terrified, hopeful, in close family groups. One brother adheres to the archetypal traditions and denies the City: "I will never understand Rocco," says the practical Ciro, who has the last word, in his final, vibrantly-deep-toned aria; "Rocco's generosity is also wrong." Rocco, a hypnotic projection of himself through a passive actor, is Visconti's supreme creation:[13]

> Alyosha . . . betrayed . . . that timid despair which leads many in our unhappy society, who dread cynicism and its corrupting influences, and mistakenly attribute all the mischief to European enlightenment, to return to their 'native soil,' as they say, to the bosom, so to speak, of their mother earth, like frightened children yearning to fall asleep on the withered bosom of their decrepit mother, and to sleep there for ever, only to escape the horrors that terrify them.

Ciro is the only one of the brothers who cannot compose the traditional Lucanian extemporaneous toast-rhyme at the dinner; he has no poetry in his soul. "Simone must turn himself in," Ciro says of the murderer brother. But Rocco believes they must sacrifice all, to save the guilty one; Rocco believes they must all suffer the punishment for having come north to the City against the will of God, instead of remaining, in happy, united poverty in their assigned place of origin.[14] "Have you too gone mad?" Ciro asks his mother, hands working in anguish against his arms. "We have all become enemies," Rocco says. And as Ciro flees (on a motor-scooter, the first motorized vehicle in the

[13] Just as Simone is the supreme creation, not of Visconti, but rather of the actor Salvatori.

[14] Early scenes in this film, the preparation for shoveling snow, the cleaning of lentils, in their subterranean Milan dwelling, reproduce this integral Lucanian happiness of the family unit, particularly Rocco's immersion in it.

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family), Rocco makes the ultimate call upon the patriarchal loyalties: "In the name of your father, Ciro, don't go!"

As Ciro speeds off, a shopfront is rolled down with a bright clatter in the middle distance; the curtain is rung down on the organism of the family, on Rocco's attempt at preservation and archaizing. Luca, the child, skipping down the dreary industrial boulevard against a frieze of industrial workers, modern tenements, and rapidly-moving mass-produced automobiles, is the future, and he will follow Ciro as an assembly-line technician, without care or troubles.

> Alyosha longed to forgive every one and for everything and to beg forgiveness. Oh, not for himself, but for all men, for all and for everything.

This film, and the method by which it sets off the sainthood of Rocco, unquestionably recalls more than just one of the titanic dramas of Dostoyevsky, with their melodrama; their fevered, incessant talk; their violent and exhausting action, forced into the space of a few days; their hammering insistence on more realism, and more. If the screams and howls of the mother, of Rocco and Simone, at the recognition of the murder, recall Gian-Carlo Menotti rather than Dostoyevsky, *The Medium* and *The Consul* rather than *The Brothers Karamazov,* be tolerant. Visconti's operatic method collapses here; just as Delon's acting collapses when he calls out "Don't blaspheme!" Suddenly he *is* just James Dean in a turtle-neck sweater. The lapse is a serious one, not to be glossed over. One must remember, however, at what scale Visconti is playing here, and what he has earned by an operatic build-up of nearly three hours at this point. The fault is simply that Visconti is Italy's leading producer of Verdi and Puccini; Mother Paxinou in this scene is approaching the high notes of Maria Callas, "who is such a great artist," in Visconti's own words.

At its deepest level, this film is about the violation of sanctity. Rocco, like Alyosha, wishes to resemble Christ, the Christian God of gentleness and love. The family unit is raped; sanctity is raped. There is the knife, and there is the posed family photo to which the camera obsessively returns against the background of the absence-from-home musical theme, Rocco's *leitmotif.* Rocco's vision of the unitary blood-link, secure and stern psychically in the face of grinding rural poverty and tyranny, is sacrificed to the wheels upon which his small deep-voiced brother Ciro turns the tool-steel cutting-edges to shape the cylinder-heads of the Alfa-Romeos with which we will crowd our autobahns, our parkways, our freeways and throughways. From Milan today, where Rocco was done to defeat, the greatest engineering feat of all runs southward, the *autostrada del sole,* someday to reach as far as Reggio Calabria, slicing through on its way the western half of that cruel and vivid and feudal and stricken Lucania that Visconti's Rocco loved so well.

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La Terra Trema and *Rocco* remain the great achievement of a man who, at fifty-five, obsessed with professionalism, is a worldly success in the three fields of grand opera, theatre and cinema.[15] Though heavily involved with such unabashedly commercial properties as Callas, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller, he has, in these two films, created what is one of the greatest achievements in the Italian cinema. The Dostoyevskyan melodrama of *Rocco* compares with the purity and gaiety of Antonioni's masterpiece, *L'Avventura,* and the lyrical poignancy of Fellini's great achievement, *I Vitelloni.* I think, too, that Antonioni is going to be a one-film man;[16] and Fellini is running downhill. But Visconti, on the contrary, seems to be gathering power.

[15] Conte don Luchino, dei duchi di Modrone, son of Conte don Giuseppe, Duca di Grazzano Visconti (the titles are Austrian and were conferred in 1815) can claim descent through frequent female successions from the celebrated Ghibelline Lucchino Visconti who was Duke of Milan at the time of its greatest territorial expansion, 1292-1349. An uncle participated in "the events of 1922"; a brother, who succeeded to the ducal title, was once married to a celebrated beauty of the international set. Being a cadet of one of the greatest Lombard families, his wealth has enabled Visconti to proceed with a free hand in following his own instinct: notably in 1948, when, without anything in hand to do, he took his cameras, alone, to Aci Trezza for his classic version of Verga's *I Malavoglia.*

[16] *L'Eclisse* (Vitti-Delon) is closely related to *La Notte* in tone and content. Antonioni does not get the results from Delon that Visconti does. Could Visconti direct Vitti? Ferzetti *(L'Avventura; Le Amiche)* is ideally suited to Antonioni's style. Cochran *(Il Grido),* Mastroianni and Delon are less adaptable.

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J. MITCHELL MORSE

Fiction Chronicle

To WALK THROUGH A PUBLISHER'S office and see the best sellers of years gone by—shelf after shelf of forgotten trash—is a depressing experience. But after all, it shouldn't be. For after all, not many good novels are written every month, and after all, if the publishers refused to publish any others they'd go out of business. And after all, the good books do get published: the case of *Ulysses* was not typical, and it did end—even considering the typographical errors—rather well. In this world, after all, you have to give a little, take a little—*you* know. With such reasonable thoughts does a chronicler of current fiction try to console himself as he contemplates the pile of bright-colored trash on his desk; for the stuff is much more depressing when it is new.

Its ineptitude is the more pitiful, its deliberate low perfunctory formula-filling the more contemptible, in view of the greatness of the best modern fiction. For in the twentieth century a few novelists have so far advanced their art that even a good old-fashioned novel now falls short of what we legitimately hope for, and a bad old-fashioned novel is an offense against human dignity. Perhaps banality is an economic necessity that we must put up with; doubtless we should not expect works of genius every day; but having seen the novel transformed in our own time, we can no longer take very seriously writers who make no use of its transformed resources.

This is not a matter of fashion, of a new manner to be adopted or rejected; it is not a matter of replacing an old *poncif* with a new one; it is a matter of being serious about one's art. Just as even in the flattest expository writing a failure of language is a failure of thought, so in fiction a failure of technique is a failure of insight. In our day an old-fashioned novel must inevitably fail as art, for nineteenth-century techniques are now only stencils, so irrelevant to the problem of expressing twentieth-century consciousness that to go on using them is to be unconscious—to make oneself unconscious—of the modern world. Consciousness is as consciousness does. In a novel, technical banality is total banality. For reasons that are too well known to need recounting here, a serious modern writer has no choice but to experiment.

But except in France there is no experimentation. To read the novels in English that come out from day to day, you'd think Joyce, Proust, Kafka, D. H. Lawrence, Thomas Mann and Henry James had never lived. Those old masters of the modern novel refined the techniques,

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broadened the scope and raised the dignity of their art; they set high standards, they have had some worthy followers—Faulkner, Broch, Hesse, I. B. Singer, the neglected Jouhandeau—and right now in France they have some worthy successors—Beckett, Butor, Robbe-Grillet—who are carrying forward the experimentation they began; but Faulkner has not developed technically beyond the point he reached in 1929 with *The Sound and the Fury,* and no writer in English now even tries to push against the limits of his art. Fiction in English is just dawdling.

It is disappointing to have to say so now that *Ship of Fools*[1] is here, for we had expected from Katherine Anne Porter a novel of the very highest quality. If after twenty years the finest writer in the country had given us a novel to rank with *Moby-Dick* or *Tristram Shandy* or *Ulysses* we would have been delighted but not surprised; as it is, since she has given us only a good one, we are let down. For not only is the modern world expressible only through such strange harmonies as those of *Moby-Dick, Tristram Shandy* and *Ulysses,* but in the modern world no novel so lacking in strangeness as *Ship of Fools* is valid as a work of art. A valid modern novel, *Le Voyeur* for example, shows us with beautiful clarity that nothing is clear; it is moreover so tightly constructed, and its structure is so integrally one with its story, that the very confusion it depicts becomes aesthetically satisfying in terms of order. That is what primitive peoples call medicine.

Were we unreasonable in expecting good medicine from Katherine Anne Porter? No. Her short stories and novellas justified the expectation. We take from our shelves and reread *Flowering Judas, The Leaning Tower* and *Pale Horse, Pale Rider.* Their medicine still works, even better than when we first read them. But there is no medicine in *Ship of Fools.* Certainly it outtops all the general run and ruck of current novels; certainly it is worth reading; but I doubt that it will be worth rereading. It just isn't up to Katherine Anne Porter's standard, which in so many ways is *the* standard. It isn't up in style, or structure, or characterization, or conception. It gives us no insights we didn't already have, and as an artistic performance it gives us no pleasure of more than ordinary intensity. Everything here is quite familiar; and though well done, it has all been done better before, by Mrs. Porter and by others.

For lack of a suitable technique, she has falsified her material: she has taken a shipload of desperately sick people, whose sickness was in fact to produce Nazi Germany and Fascist Spain, and made them quite understandable. But such sickness is just what we don't understand. We don't understand the racist and authoritarian mind, nor do we want to. It will remain forever alien to rational consciousness. The sane cannot understand the wilfully mad. We do not understand Iago or Flem Snopes, or on the other hand Uncle Toby or Don Quixote; but

[1] SHIP OF FOOLS, by *Katherine Anne Porter.* Atlantic-Little, Brown. $6.50.

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we understand the captain of the *Vera* all too easily, and in the same way we understand all his passengers. To understand them requires nothing but the merest common sense—the same common sense that tells us that the earth is flat, that you get what you pay for, and in general that things are what they seem. When we regard the Riebers and the Rittersdorfs—whose names are Symbolic, I guess—we fill up with moral indignation and intellectual scorn; and since Mrs. Porter does not lead us beyond this stage, we suffer the delusion that in hating and contemning these effigies we are entering into the consciousness of real people.

As a result of such false vision, not even the verisimilitude is good. When Mrs. Treadwell attacks Bill Denny we say, "Good for her! He had it coming, and it's long past due!" But even while enjoying the rich satisfaction of our moral sense we find ourselves objecting that the whole encounter results from the coincidence of two improbabilities—Mrs. Treadwell's wholly gratuitous and uncharacteristic blacking of her face, and Denny's mistaking her cabin of all cabins for Pastora's, at that time of all times—and that no previous thought or action of Mrs. Treadwell's makes her sudden violence credible. So that what we understand is not what takes place, but what ought to take place: our disbelief is not quite suspended, even though we wish it could be.

This intellectual slackness has affected the style too. Mrs. Treadwell, an intelligent woman with no touch of commonness about her, looks at herself in the mirror on the broad landing of the salon stairs and muses in a style that is pure soap-opera or women's-magazine:

> It was true, she was old, she had not been young for years and she had not known it, nor feared it, nor even thought of it; now seeing herself clearly and without mercy, the way others must see her, it was bitterly obvious and impossible to believe. Her age seemed something temporary, outside of herself, a garment she could put off at will, a mask painted on her face that she could by some simple magic wash away at any moment in her bath. Oh dear God, I'll be paying gigolos to sit with me in night clubs if I don't take care. Soon there won't be anybody left of my charming friends to send me flowers and dance with me and take me to the theater. I'll be sitting by myself at corner tables or on terraces and a creature with waved hair and a borderline eye will come smirking up: "Dear Madame, will you be pleased to dance?" and I—no, I'll never never! I'm going to grow old gracefully as they used to warn me I must—in those days when I knew I was going to be young forever—with a fine false front of dignity. Nobody is going to suspect that I am that unfortunate girl who couldn't grow up, that under my sober old-lady skin I am hiding carefully my sixteen-year-old heart.

She wears a "perfectly fitted, expensive-looking linen frock." My wife calls her Mrs. Treadmill. Jenny Brown, a healthy, intelligent, self-re-

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specting American girl, who you'd think would know the difference between spoken and written English, says such things as "Don't you find it is the most utterly disgraceful episode you ever heard of?" and "It's *heavenly,* David!" And listen to good old sensible Dr. Schumann:

> Frau Schmitt said, with naïve, gentle wonder: "But Doctor! This is the first time I ever heard you speak harshly!"
>
> "I mean to be harsh," said the Doctor, calmly. "I am the voice of rebuke itself lifted in the wilderness, or over the waste of waters! I wish my words were stones that I might throw them to crack the heads of those savages."
>
> "Or their hearts," said Frau Schmitt.
>
> "No, they have no hearts," said the Doctor.

Sometimes there is not only cheapness but actual confusion, as when we are told in one sentence that Johann Graf is "a perfect specimen of pure mindless well-being" and in the next that he has a "sulky, scowling face secure in its instinctive self-righteous resentment." By "pure mindless well-being," in this context, Mrs. Porter means physical health, nothing more; but certainly the phrase implies more—it would not describe poor Johann truly until after his night of sex.

I don't mean to imply that the prose is all bad. Katherine Anne Porter doesn't have her reputation as a stylist for nothing, and there are still brilliant flashes: " 'There is nothing to settle,' bawled Hansen in his unmodulated voice heavy as a club," and

> At that moment the Spanish company erupted into the dining room in the full uproar of their professional native dress and arts, and bore in procession towards the Captain to the rhythmic strains of a popular bullfighter's entrance march, played on two guitars by Tito and Manolo to the light flutter of castanets on the fingers of the ladies, whose brilliantly smiling faces were masks in black, white and red.

But such flashes are rare; even here we have to have those rhythmic strains; and schmaltzy passages such as those I have quoted are much more frequent. We all know that weak language makes weak thought, and if we didn't know before we can now no longer doubt that a surrender to commonplace thought must destroy the style of even the most excellent stylist. Katherine Anne Porter's style worked magic when she had things of her own to say; but now she has given us wisdom that will disturb no one in language that will move no one.

After such earnestness it is pleasant to turn to the easy-going relaxed and graceful prose of Christopher Isherwood:

> Waldemar hadn't reached the hangover stage as I had; he was still fairly drunk. Throughout most of what followed, he had that characteristic hostile drunk air of addressing not me but a crowd—maybe Dorothy's family, or the entire English nation.

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It isn't distinguished, but it is fun. Isherwood writes novels the way E. B. White writes essays. Reading them is one of the gentler pleasures of life, and he would by no means insist that we consider them profound. *Down There on a Visit,*[2] though its title inevitably and no doubt intentionally suggests *Là-Bas,* though its settings include Nazi Germany and Southern California, and though its autobiographical protagonist is a terrible do-gooder, nevertheless retains its urbanity throughout. That it does so without any suggestion of superciliousness or moral indifference is a cheering reminder that honesty and taste are quite compatible.

Both Isherwood and Mrs. Porter scorn racists and authoritarians; there can be no doubt that both write with propagandistic as well as artistic intent, and since *Ship of Fools* will reach a larger and less sophisticated audience it should theoretically Do More Good. In such matters, however, books that by their own example encourage firm intellectual tone are likely to be more effective than messages written in a style that softens the brain. The reactionary articles and editorials of *The Saturday Evening Post,* I venture, are not responsible for nearly so many Republican votes as are its soft-headed fiction and Norman Rockwell covers, which not only encourage us to take pride in being dull but by their aesthetic quality actually make us dull—they blunt our perceptions, filling us not only with clichés of thought but also with clichés of feeling; and the *Post*'s current wooing of intellectuals is obscene because it is conducted in the old accustomed anti-intellectual idiom. It comes out all wrong. Likewise, the cause of human dignity is poorly served by language that lacks force and dignity.

In this respect Edward Adler's *Notes from a Dark Street*[3] is even more distressing; for though Adler's attitude is largely a blend of Steinbeck, Saroyan, Harry Golden, Carl Sandburg, Ben Hecht and Billy Rose, it also includes some Adler, and Adler has beneath all that rubbish a talent of his own. He has an unfortunate phony compulsion to sing the glory-in-squalor of a slum neighborhood and to make his characters talk with defiant love about Our City, but he also has an eye and sometimes an ear. He is capable of such sharp observations as this of two old warehouses—"Once the buildings were painted entirely black, now they were simply dark"—and this of the embarrassment caused by another's wooden leg:

> Cahoon, thinking me annoyed, put a placating hand on my willow knee; awareness offended him. His hand jerked away, found refuge via his thumb and index on the lobe of an ear, again ventured toward offending knee, faltered, came to rest uneasily on my forearm.

But he is also capable of such falseness as this: "Ah, well, a shrug of the shoulders, there's nothin' else for it," and this:

[2] DOWN THERE ON A VISIT, by *Christopher Isherwood.* Simon and Schuster. $4.75.

[3] NOTES FROM A DARK STREET, by *Edward Adler.* Knopf. $2.95.

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I brought Tartock's accusation to Quastafesti. "Of course," he said, "why not? Why shouldn't he blame me? The man is a poor little fish and I'm his gaff. We both moved into this building years ago on the same day—there was something in that coincidence which drove him mad. I can't fathom any other reason for the way he's been after me all these years. . . . What's that Yiddish word that Bibber always uses?—to describe the common everyday wretchedness that boils under the skin?—that thread of rancor that spools out unbroken to the grave?"

"*Grizhe?*"

"Ah—I *grizhe* Tartock. D'you get me? It gives a unity to his life. . . . Ahh—for the love of Jesus, let's cut it out—it depresses me!"

It depresses me too, because it isn't Adler, and when Adler gives us himself he is excellent. Only his excellence is mixed and mingled with the cheapest kind of rhetoric:

In the matter of lighting our halls, Cahoon's ethic, proceeding directly from his mysterious link with the landlord, was clear and unyielding. Over each landing hung a five-watt bulb. Each bulb, having long endured, had a hairyblack bark of flywings and sludge. Our halls, the narrowest on our street, had a coalshaft's illumination.

During the day, coming from nowhere, and at night, coming from our five-watt bulbs least of all, our light was a bastard light, of no time and no place. It was sourceless and ancient, mystifying and changeless. As guilt. All things passing through it were toned by special drama; my neighbors were organic sprouts, murky and faceless, submitting to no other end but an end to themselves. Our walls sagged along the edge of the world. They would sweat in the bitterest cold. They smelled of vinegar and manure. Our steps were a century's patchwork, with a dull flatfurry coat, as if they'd been rugged by rathide.

The first paragraph here, and the last three sentences of the second paragraph, are good honest writing; in between are only meaningless words. Well, let's include the sentence "Our walls sagged along the edge of the world" among the honest ones. For this is more than mere naturalism. Mr. Yago, the narrator, an unpublished writer, the janitor calls "Mr. Poetical Author," and *Notes from a Dark Street* is intended to be poetic as *Germinal* is poetic. But such an imagination as Adler's can express its poetry only when it avoids the poetical. He should read more Zola and less Hecht. Every writer is of course a self-made writer, but Adler is one of those who are called self-educated. The tragedy is that so many are self-miseducated, and Adler is a prime example. However, his talent is such that he may yet learn to write without bombast. I look forward to his next novel.

A much better first novel, in fact one of the best and most exasperat-

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ing novels I have seen in a long time, is Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.[4] What makes it so exasperating is that it should be a bad novel but is saved by one character. For Kesey has done something remarkably refreshing: he has created a hero who *is* a hero—a heroic hero—and who can be taken seriously. It's almost enough to revive your faith in Western civilization. The extrusion mills of Soviet fiction produce official plastic People's Heroes, and our own extrusion mills produce such nifty models as Cash McCall, John Galt, the Laird of Duff-Drummond, and Dr. Glen Carew, Air Surgeon; but the heroes of serious fiction nowadays don't have much swash. Kesey's Randle Patrick McMurphy—a brawler, gambler, con man and statutory rapist who escapes the drudgery of a prison farm by getting himself committed to an insane asylum, and then turns the asylum upside down, curing patients despite the administration—makes up for them all. A cheaper or more unlikely story would be hard to think up; the trouble is that McMurphy is so convincing that we have to work hard to keep from swallowing it. McMurphy is a picaro who combines all the braw qualities of Jack Wilton, Jonathan Wild, Tom Jones, John Henry, Paul Bunyan, Big John, and The Wanderer, and is in addition a martyr and a saint. To make such a prodigy credible would be a prodigious thing even with the best of equipment in the way of literary technique, but Kesey performs the greater prodigy of bringing it off with rather ordinary equipment. I think his success is due entirely to the vigor and truth of McMurphy's idiom; for though McMurphy is a big man and not by any means an intellectual, he wins most of his victories not by force but by quick thinking and persuasive talk. The individual expressions are familiar enough working-class turns of speech, but here they are ideally concentrated, with a purity not found in nature: a kind of ideal truth.

The other characters are dim and hard to see—not only by comparison with McMurphy, but in themselves. The Big Nurse is merely a villain, not a human being: her villainy is entirely convincing, but she doesn't exist except to embody it: as the narrator says, unwittingly giving Kesey's game away, she is merely an agent of the evil forces that run the world. Likewise, the doctor who is nominally in charge, and his young assistants, are mere embodiments of moral weakness, so that when the doctor occasionally asserts himself we know that he does so only because the plot requires him to, and are not convinced. The other patients, though Kesey uses on them all the standard devices of characterization—speech, gesture, action, etc.—are little more than silhouettes. The most unfortunate of these is the narrator, a big American Indian with a delusion that "the Combine" has planted electron tubes in his brain and robbed him of his strength because he wanted to be an individual and not conform to the conformities. His point of view on conformity is unexceptionable and well stated, but it is im-

[4] ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, by *Ken Kesey*. Viking. $4.95.

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possible to believe that he could state it so well or conceive it so clearly. A person who says, "It's true. It's all wrote down," and "She knows they're watching but she don't move," and "She don't look shook at all," would not be at all likely to say, "Just at the edge of my vision I can see that white enamel face in the Nurses' Station, teetering over the desk, see it warp and flow as it tries to pull back into shape." For the same reason—lack of a sense of the fitness of language—Kesey's efforts to show the world through the mad consciousness of the Indian are ludicrous rather than frightening:

> I been in some meetings where the table legs strained and contorted and the chairs knotted and the walls gritted against one another till you could of wrung sweat out of the room. I been in meetings where they kept talking about a patient so long that the patient materialized in the flesh, nude on the coffee table in front of them, vulnerable to any fiendish notion they took; they'd have him smeared around in an awful mess before they were finished.

"I been" and "you could of" belong to a world of language, thought and feeling that is not at all the world where such words as "contorted," "materialized" and "vulnerable" come naturally. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is thus an incredible story told in a false idiom, and yet it largely comes off. I guess that's one of McMurphy's miracles. Kesey's ear is usually out of tune, but when he listens to McMurphy he hears right. When we listen to him we are willingly seduced. All his girls were willing—even the fifteen-year-old.

No miracle could save Maritta Wolff's *Buttonwood*.[5] The story it tells is the kind of thing that happens only in real life and cheap fiction; and the mere naturalism of its method is more mere than natural, for Mrs. Wolff seems to share her characters' nearsighted concern with what Hegel called the dailiness of daily life. They never look up from it, and neither does she. Her good eye and good ear are not enough. "Some persons," said William James, "have a real mania for completeness, they must express every step. They are the most intolerable of companions, and though their mental energy may in its way be great, they always strike us as weak and second-rate. In short, the essence of plebeianism, that which separates vulgarity from aristocracy, is perhaps less a defect than an excess, the constant need to animadvert upon matters which for the aristocratic temperament do not exist." To read *Buttonwood* is to live among such people without understanding their life any more than they do.

Alan Sillitoe's *Key to the Door*[6] is much more considerable; his observation of externals is as detailed as Mrs. Wolff's, but he relates it to the inner life of a boy growing up, so that the details acquire value in contributing to the boy's being. We do not grow nowhere or at no

[5] BUTTONWOOD, by *Maritta Wolff*. Random House. $4.95.
[6] KEY TO THE DOOR, by *Alan Sillitoe*. Knopf. $5.95.

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time; the nature of our growth, the tone of our voice, the texture of our skin, the rhythm of our walk, are influenced and to some extent determined by the particular air we breathe, the particular daylight we live under, the furniture we use, the conversations we take part in, the gestures we see every day, the feel of the ground under our feet on our accustomed daily routes. The best of the naturalist writers have always based their work on some such theory, and Sillitoe is in their tradition. Following his central character, Brian Seaton, from his little-boyhood in the industrial slums of Nottingham through his youth as a factory worker and later as a soldier, we can understand why in the jungles of Malaya he shot at trees, at stones or at nothing rather than at the Communist guerrillas who were shooting at him. The political clichés he exchanges with his friend Knotman, though pitiful in themselves, are valid expressions of the personality he has become. They are a direct outgrowth of his early self-education through such books as *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Les Misérables,* purchased largely because books represented elegance and luxury—a view his parents unwittingly confirmed when they scolded him for wasting his money on books instead of buying himself some shoes.

A working-class writer has essentially the same problem as a Negro writer: to write about the life he knows, in all its inwardness, for people whose inwardness is different. This means—if his his work is to have more than picturesque or sociological interest—that he must translate the experience of his group into the vocabulary of another; and since we see and feel with our vocabulary, since language is an instrument of perception even more than of communication, since the quality of our experience is inseparable from that of the language by which we become aware of it or through which we experience it, the process of translation involves the risk of falsifying the experience not only to our readers but even to ourselves. Sillitoe avoids this difficulty by limiting himself to the vocabulary of the working class, and thereby runs into the other difficulty: the interest of his novel is chiefly sociological, since the experiences that can be conveyed or even experienced in that vocabulary are rather simple and undifferentiated. At least they seem to be. We feel that we are pretty much limited to externals, that we are missing the inwardness of working class life.

There has never been a satisfactory novel of working class life in these terms. Lawrence perhaps came closest to it, but Paul Morel is a portrait of an artist rather than of a worker, and the Brangwens and the others are merely illustrations of Lawrence's theory of *Blut und Boden.* What we need are new techniques. Joyce's worked very well for conveying the life of the lower middle class; if there has been no working class character to match Leopold Bloom, it is because there has not yet been a working class genius to match Joyce, and because talents like those of Sillitoe and Ralph Ellison are imprisoned in hopelessly inadequate techniques. To develop new ones would be an inevitable expres-

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sion of genius. It would also require an interest in the art of writing for its own sake, which is not apparent. The whole populist tradition—since it contemns books as la-de-da—works against such interest.

The sad aftermath of populism can be seen most clearly in Clancy Sigal's *Going Away*.[7] The populist movement brought about many desirable social reforms, but its anti-urbanism and anti-intellectualism, its simple equation of naiveté with virtue and of sophistication with vice, have played into the hands of the enemies of reform, thickening the speech and befuddling the brains of their victims. It's so bad that if a working man speaks clearly and intelligently he is avoided by his fellows. Sigal avoids being avoided. Even his college professors talk like nose-pickers. They're OK, kid. His book here deals with the collapse of the left, see, and you gotta admit that's like a pretty important, you know, subject, I mean McCarthyism and all, and like the Hungarian thing, but what the hell, you know what I mean?—

> Then I thought, ah fuck them. I was getting very tired, in Chicago, of presenting myself to people and not getting presented back. I finished my drink, went to the juke box and stuck in all the change I had in my pocket, pressing down a number of times on the button beside someone called The Kitti-Kats singing "Isle of Capri" and then walked out. That would fix *them*.

"It was in New York," says the narrator, "that I moved into the Village." Well, where the hell else would you move into the Village is what I'd like to know. "Dave was a different kettle of fish. How he tied in with Zack God alone knew." Well, don't ask *me*. "Even when the detours lay most heavily upon him. . . ." ah what the hell.

Meanwhile, over on the right—in Richard Hughes's *The Fox in the Attic*[8]—there is some useful information to be picked up. Hughes knows what rich Jews smell like. He doesn't tell us, but at least we know now they have a distinctive smell. We also know that the Bavarian royalists, the Ludendorffers and all the other enemies of the Weimar Republic, including the Nazis, were for the most part selfless, venturesome, dedicated idealists—"Galahads"—trying to rid Germany of the blight of representative government. We get the impression that the only thing wrong with Ludendorff was his old age, that the only thing wrong with Hitler was his insanity, and that the only thing wrong with their followers was a certain impetuousness. The right-wing movements that ultimately produced Nazi Germany are portrayed as wholesome and desirable, and English political and social life as decadent and effete. Lothar, a hotel clerk, belongs to a right-wing group of anarchists who believe that by killing democratic officials they can create "chaos," out of which sound government will arise. To that end he practices judo in a gymnasium:

[7] GOING AWAY, by *Clancy Sigal*. Houghton Mifflin. $5.75.
[8] THE FOX IN THE ATTIC, by *Richard Hughes*. Harper. $4.50.

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> He found here that decent, modest, manly kind of idealism as necessary to youth everywhere as desert watersprings. "True," thought Lothar, "we are come here only to exercise our brute bodies; but in fact how innocently do Body and Spirit walk hand in hand! How much more often the Eye of Horus"—their private name for that rare hawklike eye that pierces to the spiritual behind every material veil—"is found in the faces of simple athletes rather than of philosophers or priests!"

His brother, "the noble Wolff," "the winning, open-faced boy," is hiding out after having murdered a democratic official, and planning his next murder. He hides out in the castle of a provincial aristocrat who punishes his children by chaining them in the doghouse in mid-winter but really has a heart of gold, and who evidently represents for Hughes everything good in German culture.

The quality of the prose is suitable to that of the sentiment:

> You could almost hear the click as those "hoops of steel" settled into place, binding all these ardent young men together into one body like well-coopered barrel staves. . . . They cheered till the building shook. . . . For the first time he felt for his young English cousin something that was almost affection, and clapped him on the shoulder till the dust flew. . . . He had slammed his ears tight shut in Walther's face. . . . The bandsmen were demanding breakfast before they'd play to them—and at that word Lothar's saliva-glands stabbed so violently it hurt like toothache. . . . His voice remained firm as a lion's. . . . There were details which plucked at his eyes so that he could not help but look. . . . The sergeant's mind's arm gave his mind's Gretl a hearty, a corset-bursting squeeze. . . . From his temples the sweat spurted. . . .

As I write, this thing has been near the top of *The New York Times*'s best-seller list for nine weeks, and several London reviewers have compared Hughes to Tolstoy. It's enough to make the sweat spurt from your temples.

Aldous Huxley's *Island*[9] is considerably more liberal in its attitudes and somewhat more literate in its prose. Still, Huxley is primarily a writer of science fiction and fictionized sociology, and this is just more of the same. Now he's pro-pleasure instead of anti; that's the only difference. In literary terms, *Island* is of no consequence. Here's a sample of the style:

> Will shrugged his mental shoulders. [Sort of like that sergeant's mind's arm, I guess.] Colonels will be colonels and boys, even boys like Murugan, will be gun-loving boys. There would always be plenty of jobs for special correspondents on the trail of death.
>
> "So you'll strengthen Pala's army?" Will said aloud.

[9] ISLAND, by *Aldous Huxley*. Harper. $5.00.

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So all in all, like I said, the old-fashioned novel doesn't seem to be going anywhere much. The most encouraging sign is from India: Balachandra Rajan's *Too Long in the West.*[10] It is a very pleasant light satirical piece, quite conventional and harmless, but the quality of its English is better than that of any of the other novels I have discussed. Perhaps the future of English lies in the hands of those to whom it has the freshness of a foreign language. Let us hope that the newly independent countries will also develop some independence in literary technique.

We come now to three volumes of short stories: John Updike's *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories,*[11] Richard Yates's *Eleven Kinds of Loneliness,*[12] and Mikhail Sholokhov's *Tales of the Don.*[13] Updike's is the only one worth considering, but it is worth a great deal. In the first place, he has respect for the English language—a very, very rare thing nowadays; he handles it well, with care, with precision, with art. In the second place, his language being such a fine instrument that perception and communication are one, Updike shows us things and relationships we have gone through life missing. In the title story he observes David's dog, Copper, with such uncommon sensitivity, such care, such joy, that we see this dog, as we have never seen any dog before, in context: he becomes an expression of the aimless force and blind prodigality of nature, or alternatively of the infinite skill of the Great Engineer, depending on your view of religion:

> The dog's ears, laid flat against his skull in fear, were folded so intricately, so—he groped for the concept—*surely*. Where the dull-studded collar made the fur stand up, each hair showed a root of soft white under the length, black-tipped, of the metal-color that had lent the dog its name. In his agitation Copper panted through nostrils that were elegant slits, like two healed cuts, or like the keyholes of a dainty lock of black, grained wood. His whole whorling, knotted, jointed body was a wealth of such embellishments.

Nor is the description gratuitous. This fine perception of the dog, we know immediately, is part of David's development; his corresponding perception of the pigeon feathers at the end of the story, and even the conclusion he draws from it, are implicit here.

Most of the stories deal with a young suburban couple and their children; though in general they accept the universe, they are nevertheless intelligent and attractive; and though Updike leaves their culture unchipped, unchallenged and unquestioned, though he seems to be a very cautious young man indeed, still—he can write, he can write,

[10] TOO LONG IN THE WEST, by *Balachandra Rajan*. Atheneum. $4.50.
[11] PIGEON FEATHERS, by *John Updike*. Knopf. $4.00.
[12] ELEVEN KINDS OF LONELINESS, by *Richard Yates*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $4.50.
[13] TALES OF THE DON, by *Mikhail Sholokhov*. Knopf. $4.50.

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he can write. And that's what I want in a writer. This is one book I can recommend.

By comparison, Richard Yates is heavy—as my son would say, about as subtle as a beer ad. He was speaking of a painter's colors. I am speaking of Yates's prose:

> He began to walk slowly toward an easy chair across the room, and the shape of his back was an eloquent statement of impending defeat. At the edge of the carpet he stopped and seemed to stiffen, a wounded man holding himself together; then he turned around and faced her with the suggestion of a melancholy smile.

Yates is a serious writer in the sense that he writes about serious problems; but with prose like that nobody can be a serious writer in the sense that he can be taken seriously.

Mikhail Sholokhov is a prize specimen of the Soviet equivalent of our own slick writers. *Tales of the Don* is a collection of early stories, 1924 to 1926; even then, the pattern was set. The happy stories are like when the good guys kill the bad guys, and the sad stories are like when the bad guys kill the good guys, see? Get it? One, "Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Republic," is a parody of the others; but the others are almost, as Dr. Johnson would say, ridiculous beyond the power of satire to exaggerate. The editor of a popular magazine once said of an article I had submitted, "We can use this if you can dumb it down." At the time I needed money very badly, so I dumbed it down. I guess Sholokhov still needs money.

AARON ASHER

Honorable Wounds

LIKE MANY GOOD WRITERS, George P. Elliott increasingly displays the lineaments of his obsessions. His second novel[1] is set in Elliott country, San Francisco and the Bay Area; its characters are mainly middle-class, white Protestant, genteel, cultivated, much concerned with family matters. The reader familiar with Elliott's earlier work will find other allusions to it. (One example is the frequently encountered dab of Roman Catholicism.) And the ever-apparent intelligence, clarity, sour reasonableness—an Elliott tone, in short—are here in *David Knudsen,* a stronger book by far than the first novel, *Parktilden Village,* which

[1] DAVID KNUDSEN, by *George P. Elliott.* Random House. $4.95.

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was that rare thing, a poor Elliott story—and one unduly extended, thin but ponderously plotted. Yet the new book, thematically and didactically ambitious, lacks the invention, wit, and audacity that enable Elliott to surprise and convince us in the best of his stories and personal essays. I think that Elliott decided—in sober consideration of how best to transmit his vision of mid-century America—to suppress the frivolities of the imagination. Judging from the power he has shown elsewhere, this seeming decision to restrict himself, to apply severe late-Tolstoyan principles of art, I consider a mistake.

The book's starting point is, besides, a set-up for anything but its prevailing rather bland naturalism: "I have suffered from an illness peculiar to our time," Knudsen begins this *soi-disant* autobiography, "radiation sickness from fallout, and my father was one of the physicists who developed the nuclear bomb." So schematic an opening demands, it seems to me, the compensations of fantasy or further extremism and a hero less dim, less slack. The combined effect of a diagrammatic situation and a character whose charm, intelligence, and complexity are more often stated than demonstrated vitiates the lessons we are intended to learn from his life. Knudsen, after all, also says at the beginning, "It is possible that if I confess what I know about myself, I shall have said more about you than if I had tried to say what I know about you—whoever I am, whoever you are." Strong words (though colorless), which we are to take without irony; their speaker should have more stature than he is given, be more interestingly screwed-up.

"Dad, the Bomb, Carol [his wife], the Zeitgeist, Science: I had looked for these as causes of my troubles but, having found them, had turned them into excuses for my failures." So Knudsen near the end. The quest followed through more than three hundred pages peters out in revelation of a personal failure; Knudsen ends talking, despite the pronouncement at the beginning, to no one but himself. Dad, the Bomb, Carol, etc., separately or taken together, do not account for his emptiness and despair, and so we return from social to private life, to personal psychology if not to a Jonsonian humor. Which would be all right, were Knudsen not so drab. As it is, he mopes around pretty early in the book, before his radiation sickness, before the Bomb even (though not of course before Dad); Elliott, it seems, has not so much changed course as he has been unwilling in this novel to create a hero who can sustain the pressure on us of his dissatisfactions. Lassitude and passivity do not preclude dramatic action, as so many of the classic twentieth-century heroes or anti-heroes have shown in their various and grotesque ways. They share, but not with Knudsen, a Dickensian individuality; they are marked men, quirky, willful, erratic, extreme.

I have made overly clear my dislike for the narrator, for the conception of this narrator. He lives less than anyone else in the book, and if we had not had to take as exemplary *his* aphorisms and discoveries, if he had been part of a third-person scheme, the novel might have

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worked better. For, happily, there is a world around him, which Elliott —the good part of Knudsen, the writer in Knudsen—gives us freely. The other important figures are well-observed: The father, cold, academically permissive, an image of America giving too much freedom to its unprepared young—Elliott knows this man well (see Jefferson Devereux in *Parktilden Village* and the old inventor Gordon Mott in "A Family Matter," for near relatives). The mother, who disappears early in the action: "Watching Mother die was like watching a pliant custom turn into a rigid law," says David in one of his self-conscious verbal finds. A sister, Anna, who chooses suburban life in marriage with a One Culture biochemist but twists out of simplicity and caricature in a well-conceived and meaningful epiphany of trucks and cars on a California freeway. The wild sister, Julia, moving from half-disciplined communism to promiscuity and despairing bohemianism. Carol, mettlesome enough to read the *New Republic* and be fired from her job for "security" reasons, complexly troubled and far from the standard fiction model of the frigid bitch-wife. (These and a dozen other characters are true coinages, and so, to jab at Knudsen one last time, the ups and downs of his descriptive powers and knowledge too clearly reflect Elliott's shifts from ventriloquist to dummy.)

I can go on to report with pleasure that, as already hinted above, *David Knudsen* is valuable for its somber and original vision of life in the America of these last two decades. In his best scenes and meditations Elliott manages to move from abstraction and render in fiction a version of contemporary spiritual and moral failings. The easy and difficult ways out appear and are developed with fine strategic sense: Knudsen, a photographer, tries to escape from his blank freedom with the motto "art be my health," recapitulating the familiar but important trip to and from the oasis-mirage of aestheticism. And after the Pacific bomb test during which he accidentally catches radiation sickness, the temptation of the Church comes and goes. Elliott skillfully conveys the guilt and repression that can exist in a milieu gilded with real and imagined freedom. Here his naturalism is a virtue, for there are nowadays few other serious writers of fiction (Wright Morris is one) who take as their subject the majority culture. Working, that is, in middle America, wherever it may be.

Finally then, *David Knudsen* seems to me to show the honorable wounds of a battle between Elliott's imagination and his sense of responsibility. From so conscious a writer we can hopefully expect further progress toward the necessary reconciliation of his art and our common reality.

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G. E. DIMOCK, JR.

On Translating Greek Comedy

THE ELEVEN SURVIVING COMEDIES of Aristophanes together with Menander's recently discovered *Dyscolus* are to be published in a series of new verse translations, edited by William Arrowsmith for the University of Michigan Press under the general title, *The Complete Greek Comedy*. The first four plays have now appeared.[1] The series promises to be a handsome one, the plays being bound individually in cloth of contrasting solid, bright colors. The typography is pleasing and original, and not the least attractive feature of the edition is the provision of illustrative black-and-white sketches, by Stuart Ross, Geraldine Sakall, Thomas McClure, and Richard Sears. Finally and most important, all four plays can be read with pleasure.

How much of the fun is due to Aristophanes and how much to the translators, pretty funny men themselves, is probably an insoluble question. We may doubt Arrowsmith's contention that comedy is harder to translate than tragedy, but it is certainly true that you can't translate Athenian Old Comedy simply by turning the Greek into the corresponding literal English equivalent (though you might get away with something of the sort for Menander, whose "New Comedy" so-called is much less tied to a particular time and place). In translating Old Comedy you have to transpose; for example, Parker transposes a starving Megarian into a hungry southerner to bring out the effect of Aristophanes' use of dialect, and Arrowsmith turns a piece of demagoguery into a commercial because the ancient audience's attitude toward political fast talk was much like ours toward Madison Avenue. Here much depends on the translator's own comic invention—with which fortunately, as I have said, our present translators are well supplied.

Parker's comic flair has an especially large area to work in because he has decided to meet the problem of Explanation simply by being copious:

> Xanthias, you know what this is? It's a phallic procession.
> *This* is the Phallus, the Symbol of Phales, the god.
> *(He indicates his daughter.)*
> And *that* is the basket bearer, the Ritual Virgin.
> Now, the two of you get in behind that Virgin
> and erect that Symbol—and keep it erect.
>
> Don't droop!

[1] ARISTOPHANES: BIRDS, trans. by *William Arrowsmith;* ACHARNIANS, trans. by *Douglass Parker;* CLOUDS, trans. by *William Arrowsmith;* FROGS, trans. by *Richmond Lattimore*. Univ. of Michigan Press. $4.50 each.

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And it is not only this simple sort of explanation that makes Parker copious. He has everywhere sacrificed conciseness to making sure that we get the joke, and while occasionally this may flatten out a bit of bawdy like the Planting of Miss Peace's Garden, or scatology like the Great King of Persia's Crap, making it last a line or three too long, in general the method succeeds brilliantly. For example the Megarian, mentioned before, takes five lines of English to say what he does in two of Greek and we wouldn't spare a syllable of it:

> —Dahlin daughtuhs, yo' mizzuble offspring of a sire
> whom the clutch of circumstance conspires to mold into a bum,
> come heah to yo' daddy, an' prepare to take that first
> great step to'd the Ultima Thuley of Worldly Wishes—
> Ah refer, of co'se, to FOOD.
> —Ef'n yo' kin find any.

If this is windier than Aristophanes' Megarian, it goes with the dialect Parker has chosen. In fact windiness is one of the themes of the play, and so there is a good deal of Euripidean parody, at which Parker is very good also:

> This very day must I a mendicant mime,
> must be the thing I am, yet seem another.

This is all there in the Greek, and yet a less sophisticated translator could have given us, say,

> For I must seem to be a beggar today,
> must be who I really am, but not appear so.

Parker is also a good hand with the short lyrics with which the dialogue of Old Comedy is punctuated:

> —What can you do?
> —What can you say?
> —You're an alloy of iron and brass!
> —The stake is your head,
> —you're only one man,
> —you're attacking Athens *en masse!*
> —Look, he doesn't shiver.
> —Not a quiver.
> —No shriek.
> —All right, you wanted it, Hero.
> —Now speak.

This is very good rendering indeed of Aristophanes' dochmiacs. It is true that the chorus in Greek takes Dikaiopolis' heresy more seriously than the tone of "No shriek" would perhaps suggest, but how can we take the Athenians' troubles as seriously as they took them themselves? We are once more up against the need to transpose into our own key.

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Parker's most startling transposition, however, does serve to give us some idea of what it would be like to be seriously engaged in the Athenian situation, though I think this is unintentional. In the *Acharnians* Aristophanes dares to attack the justice of the Athenian cause in the Peloponnesian War, now in its sixth year. He lampoons the War Party in the person of Lamachos, a braggart-soldier, who on one occasion proclaims,

I SHALL PROSECUTE THIS WAR.
I SHALL STRIKE DEEP INTO THE SOFT UNDERBELLY OF THE PELOPONNESIANS.
I SHALL NOT FLAG OR FAIL. I SHALL FIGHT IN SPARTA.
I SHALL FIGHT ON THE SEAS AND OCEANS, I SHALL FIGHT ON THE FIELDS
AND IN THE STREETS, I SHALL FIGHT IN THE HILLS: I SHALL NEVER SURRENDER.

Dikaiopolis' counter-blast is quite funny:

I SHALL INSTITUTE A MARKET.
I SHALL SELL DELIGHTS FOR THE SOFT UNDERBELLY OF THE PELOPONNESIANS,
THE MEGARIANS, AND THE BOIOTIANS: I SHALL NOT LACK FOR SALES.
I INVITE THEM TO LEAVE THEIR HILLS, I INVITE THEM TO QUIT
THEIR FIELDS, I INVITE THEM TO TRAVERSE THE SEAS AND OCEANS.
I SHALL MEET THEM IN THE STREETS AND THERE ENGAGE THEM
IN GOOD OLD ATHENIAN TRADE. I SHALL NEVER SURRENDER
MY MONOPOLY. THEY MAY TRADE WITH ME—BUT NOT WITH LAMACHOS.

(This all represents just six lines of Greek—three for Lamachos and three for Dikaiopolis.) Parker is I suppose merely trying for a laugh of recognition and poking mild fun at Churchillian rhetoric, but it is possible for a moment to feel what it would be like to have one's own war laughed at.

On the whole Parker has done just what he set out to do: he has given us a very funny, actable play, full of Aristophanic exuberance, and probably as true to Aristophanes as one can be for the purposes of a modern audience.

In the first of his plays Arrowsmith has an easier problem than Parker. There is less that needs to be explained or transposed, birds being less special than Acharnian charcoal-burners, and so on all down the line. For another thing, he is often content to leave pretty much alone even quite obscure jokes, relying for his effects on manipulations of tone:

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Say,
What about you, Birdie? What the hell are you?
SANDPIPER:
I'm a Slavebird.
EUELPIDES:
I see. Some bantam thrash you
in a scrap?
. . .
And since when have our birds been having butlers?
SANDPIPER:
He gets the habit, I think, from having once been human.
But suppose he wants some sardines. Up I jump,
dash down with a dish and catch him some fish.
If it's soup he wants, I grab a little ladle
and skitter to the kettle.
EUELPIDES:
Quite the runner, eh?
Tell you what, runner-bird: just skitter inside
and fetch your master out.

The play of the language in dialogue like this is such that we scarcely need to know that there is a pun on *trochilos* and *trecho* ("sandpiper" and "run") or that the loser in a cock fight was called the "slave-bird."

Occasionally the shifts of tone go too far, as when Pisthetairos asks on one page,

Yeah,
what's so damn funny?

and on the next

But it's bound to seem a bit odd, isn't it?

On the other hand the rightness of the rendering of a multiplicity of manners constantly delights us, as when the translator catches the pundit in Prometheus cropping up even in the midst of important negotiations; or the inevitable bird-watchers:

PISTHETAIROS:
Look, there's the Partridge!
EUELPIDES:
And here's the Hooded Ptarmigan!
PISTHETAIROS:
And there's a Widgeon, I think.

Another delight is the entrance of the Panting Messenger. Aristophanes had an advantage in that the Greek word for "where" is *pou,* but Arrowsmith transposes effortlessly:

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MESSENGER:
Where anh where hoo where uh where can he be?
Where is Pisthetairos hanh?
PISTHETAIROS:
Here hunh here.

However, in contrast with scenes like this one, in the *Birds* entire lyrics, and indeed the whole final scene, are as far as their language goes perfectly serious in tone. The contrast with the rest of the play is marked, and the effect is oddly wistful. The first such lyric, Tereus' song with his nightingale-wife, is sheer beauty, and because it is serious we feel all the more poignantly that this is a beauty attainable by birds and not by men. Tereus' purpose is simply to summon the rest of the birds to council, but as he invites his wife to sing he fills us with yearning, just by evoking the beauty of her song in two marvelous anapestic stanzas. The "duet" which follows is really an accompanied solo: Procne turns out to be an off-stage flute. The words Tereus sings are only a pot-pourri of bird habits and imitated bird calls, but as poetry they become yearning for the absolutely non-human. Arrowsmith achieves the contrast and the sudden seriousness of desire by giving us for once a piece of language almost completely free of manner:

All you who in the gardens nest,
who perch beneath the ivy's leaves!
O rangers on the mountain, come
arbutus-stealers, olive-thieves!
Flock, flock to my call! Come, O come!
trio trio trio totobrix!

The song ends in practically pure bird-language:

Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye!
Come to council, come!
Hither, hither, hither!
Toro toro toro tix
kikka bau, kikka bau
toro toro toro li
li lix!
PISTHETAIROS:
Hey, seen any birds yet?

In this fashion we return to the more obviously comic, but though the nightingale remains off-stage our yearning for her is not forgotten, and at the end of the first half of the play we sympathize with the chorus in its plea to Tereus to show her to them:

By all means take your human guests and feast them well.
But first do one little favor for the chorus, please.
Bring out your wife, your lovely Nightingale,
the bird with honeyed tongue, the Muses' love,
and let the chorus play with her a little while.

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Arrowsmith has caught the wistfulness of which I spoke, and indeed in the Athens of 414 B.C. the time is short to play with this particular nightingale. Procne is duly led on stage to provide the customary cheese-cake, and as usual we discover that Aristophanes has made his play's cheese-cake into the embodiment of its dream of happiness. But whereas the girls achieved by Dikaiopolis at the end of the *Acharnians* were attainable—all that was needed was a perfectly possible peace with Sparta—a bird-wife is not attainable. Still less so is Basileia, the girl at the end of the *Birds* of whom Procne is the fore-runner. Won away from Zeus himself by the fortification of Cloudcuckooland, the City of the Birds, Basileia stands for nothing less than Universal Domination. To Aristophanes the dreams which led to the Sicilian Expedition were no less mad. Hence, I think, the serious tone of the last scene of the *Birds*. The more it is a straight-faced apotheosis of the grand-strategist Pisthetairos, the more frightening and pathetic the mad dream. "Do not seek to be Zeus!" Pindar had warned, but the *Birds'* chorus sings all unaware,

> O Lightning, flash of livid fire,
> O javelin of Zeus,
> everliving light!
> *(A great low roll of thunder is heard)*
> O thunders breaking on this lovely world,
> rumble majestic that runs before the rain!
> O Lightning and Thunders,
> bow low, bow down,
> bow before this man, bow to the lord of all!
> *(Another great crack of thunder)*
> He wields the thunder as his very own.
> Lightnings flare at the touch of his hand,
> winning, achieving
> the Bride of Heaven and the Crown of God!
> O Hymen! Hymenaios O!

Arrowsmith allows us to feel the magnificence of the mad dream as Aristophanes portrayed it, and the result is the poignancy of great comedy.

This version of the *Birds* will inevitably be compared with Dudley Fitts's, to which indeed it pays the compliment, here and there, of the adoption of an idea. Fitts's lyrics are in general more successful, and his whole play is much more truly a verse translation since both Arrowsmith and Parker use "a loose five-stress [or six-stress] line" which "at its most humdrum . . . is indistinguishable from prose" (the quotation is from Arrowsmith's introduction). But for comic invention and exuberance Arrowsmith's translation is unsurpassed unless it be by his team-mate Parker's, and in truth to the spoken word it stands by itself.

Arrowsmith's version of the *Clouds* has the virtues of his *Birds:* it is written in good broad American, and it is funny. There are some

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novelties in the staging: Aristophanes himself instead of the chorus is made to speak the parabasis because in the revised version of the play, the only one which has come down to us, the poet does literally speak in the first person here, though the manuscripts assign the speech to the chorus. Again, The Just and the Unjust Argument are brought in in cages as fighting cocks, just as the scholiast suggests. Arrowsmith's defense of this seems right, and the play appears to work well so performed. Not so obviously right is the pot-bellied stove on stage implying an original charcoal kiln set up outside Socrates' Thinkery as a working model of the universe. That the Cosmical Oven is a dominant metaphor of the play we may well doubt after reading the long note on the subject (p. 116). The oven *(pnigeus)* on page 16 seems to be connected with the large bowl or cup *(dinos)* on page 108 only by a gnat's posterior wind (page 19). Like the other plays in the series, this one is provided with a useful introduction, notes, and glossary by the translator. In the introduction he has good things to say about the relation between the Socrates of the play and the Socrates we think of as "real"; that is, Plato's: if the Socrates of the play is a wild distortion, what else would we expect of Old Comedy, in which invective and abuse were not merely permitted but demanded? According to the standards of the genre, Socrates is mildly treated. Students should be warned however that the official indictment against Socrates did *not* read: "Socrates is a malefactor who meddles in the matters of the heavens and the earth below, who makes the Worse Argument appear the Better and teaches others to follow his example," although on pages 4, 117, and 119 he will read that it did. When Arrowsmith says that Socrates admitted dabbling in scientific research in the *Apology,* he means in the *Phaedo.*

Richmond Lattimore is the foremost translator of Greek now writing in English. In fact he is better than that; many "foremost translators" have not been nearly so good. His *Frogs* of Aristophanes is no disappointment. He is the man who can stay close to the Greek and still make it work in English, if anyone can, and accordingly this is the most faithful translation of the series so far. (Once in a while faithful translation is easy: Herakles retorts to Dionysus' bragging,—just like that in good Greek, "And then I woke up.") However, even Lattimore found it helpful to make certain transpositions, including the use of rhyme:

> DIONYSUS (*to Aeschylus*):
> O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies, grand old bulwark of balderdash,
> frontispiece of Hellenic tragedy, open the faucets and let 'er splash.

The critical implications of the play's climax, the tragedy contest between Aeschylus and Euripides, are well summed up in the introduction. (It is interesting that the caricature of Aeschylus is just about as distorted as that of Socrates in the *Clouds.*) Even the complicated jokes about meter, involving the tag-lines "lost his little oil bottle" for

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Euripides and "oho what a stroke come you not to the rescue" for Aeschylus, are succinctly and effortlessly explained. In the play itself Lattimore is able, as usual, to make the Greek rhythms come out as though they were English:

> Let flames fly as the torch tosses in hand's hold
> Iacchos O Iacchos
> star of fire in the high rites of the night time.
> And the field shines in the torch light,
> and the old men's knees are limber, . . .

His version of the *brekekekex-koax-koax* song of the frogs is very well done. So is his version of the parodies of Aeschylus; for example:

> Fearful shall be the spleen now of Thundermutter withinside
> when the riptooth-sharpening he sees of his multiloquacious
> antagonist to encounter him. Then shall ensue dread
> eyewhirl of fury.

By the date of the play, Aeschylus and Euripides were only to be found in the after-life, and that is where Dionysus finds them. He naturally enough also finds those who achieved immortality by being initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. They still chant their "bridge-songs" as they did in life at the bridge over the Ilissos on their yearly way to Eleusis:

> I saw a sweet little girl in the crowd down there.
> As she leaned forward, her dress, I swear,
> bust open a trifle
> and I was happy to stare
> at a bosomy eyeful.
> Iacchos lover of dancing help me on my way.

And as the procession resumes,

> . . . and I shall go where the girls go and I shall go with the women
> who keep the nightlong rite of the goddess and carry their sacred torch.
>
> Let us go where roses grow
> and fields are in flower,
> in the way that is ours alone,
> playing our blessed play
> which the prosperous Fates today
> ordain for our playing.

I do not think it is too much to say that in this translation the spirit of the Mysteries can still be felt.

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CECIL HEMLEY

Onward and Upward

PERSE'S MANNER IS EASILY RECOGNIZABLE.[1] He likes broad, oratorical effects, dazzling metaphors, sonorous music. A poet of sensibility and not of intellect, his ideas are never difficult. If at moments his language becomes elliptical, this is because he prefers the irrational and suggestive to the direct and clear. A Perse poem always involves dark areas which can not be elucidated with precision. Those who require that the words of a poem absolutely implicate each other will find his structure weak.

The first work of his that I read was *Eloges* and I still regard it as one of his most successful efforts. The elegiac attitude toward childhood, almost conventional by now, allows him great scope for his virtuosity. He can rely on his audience knowing his theme almost before it is stated. Perse's intricate and exotic style transforms the traditional matter into a new experience. So it becomes one of the great romantic poems, nostalgia again, but how wonderfully handled.

Chronique, excellently translated by Robert Fitzgerald, is something else again, a much more ambitious work. When Perse was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1960, the Swedish Academy praised the poem "as a prophetic appeal to Europe to consider the fatal moment, the turning point in the course of historical events." An appeal it certainly is, and in many respects an eloquent one. Stockholm listened, and no doubt we should also.

Perse, of course, does not pretend to be a philosopher, and yet in a way *Chronique* seeks to sum up history. It does this poetically rather than by argument, but the fact that it does take a position leaves it open to refutation. One can legitimately ask, has Perse dealt adequately with history; the earlier *Eloges* can not be subject to such scrutiny since a man's recollection of his childhood is private business, and he can feel about it as he pleases. *Chronique,* then, can be discussed on two levels: 1) is the poem rhetorically interesting? 2) does it advance a defensible position?

Chronique is more or less Hegelian in its viewpoint, Perse seeing history as the evolvement of human freedom. He, like a good many poets before him, is on the side of humanity; he has great faith in man. The race, as a collective entity, is seen by him as marching forward and may, if it survives its various adversities, transcend itself. Those who on occasion have been displeased with the way things are going, are men of little vision. All that the collective "we" need do is

[1] CHRONIQUE, by *St. John Perse.* Translated by *Robert Fitzgerald.* Pantheon Books, Bollingen Series LXIX. $5.00.

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accept "our" great destiny and it will be "ours." As can be seen, there is nothing very novel in this position, but Perse does wonders with language. All of his great rhetorical gifts are brought to bear on the issue and the rush of metaphors is such that while the reader remains in the universe of the poem, he accepts the poet's analysis. Once the performance is over, however, he may have doubts. Is the world properly understood in terms of ages and history and a collective humanity? Indeed there is an easy optimism about *Chronique* which some may find, as I did, maudlin.

The poem begins with great authority; Perse is a master of tone:

> Great age, behold us. Coolness of evening on the heights, breath of the open sea on every threshold, and our foreheads bared for open spaces. . . .

But who is being addressed? The age! And who is the age? An abstraction. Moreover, the speaker is equally abstract, unidentified and unidentifiable. Discourse is taking place in the empyrean and we are merely eavesdropping.

As a matter of fact, it is extremely doubtful that any of this really concerns us. We are not humanity, only men. The world that Perse is disclosing is visible to God and the angels, if to anyone, since it leaps beyond the generations into vast expanses of time. Yet the language is gorgeous.

> Raise your head, man of evening. The great rose of the years, turns round your serene brow. The great tree of the sky, like an opal, robes itself in the West, with scarlet flies, cochineal.

Hearing such a divine exhortation, one is put off one's guard. It almost seems that you are being spoken to. I know that the first time I read the passage, I instinctively braced my shoulders, looked up at the heavens, and took a great breath. I couldn't help it; I was inspired. But then an incongruous thought came to me. How would these words sound to a group of Hungarian political prisoners or to some hospital patients dying of cancer? Would they, I wondered, be equally elevated. Surely they had to be considered part of the age? No, I had the feeling, I did not want to recite *Chronique* to them. I very much doubted that they would be comforted by such lines as:

> O Death adorned with ivory gauntlet, you cross in vain our paths cobbled with bones, for our way lies beyond.

No doubt about it! But do the bones that are crossed upon feel that philosophic about it? Perse, it is true, recognizes that

> The squire-at-arms accoutred in bones, whom we house and who serves for a wave, will desert this evening at the bend in the road.

But this is as close as he gets to the personal. *Chronique* is con-

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cerned with the deathless, with that which feeds on death and moves forward courageously. It has no time for the dying; the generations reproduce themselves. Humanity is as young as it was at its inception, although, of course, all of its members are different. This is truly an Olympian attitude, but is it the way that man experiences his life?

I know that it is cold comfort for me, moving through my small arc of time, to learn that

> Tomorrow the great raiding thunderstorms, and the lightning at work. . . . The caduceus of the sky descends to mark the earth with its sign. The alliance is sealed.
>
> Ah, may an *elite* also rise, of very tall trees on the earth, like a tribe of great souls that shall hold us of their council. . . .

To paraphrase the more cynical poet, George Wither, "If it be not for me/What care I how fair it be?"

But the fact is that since *Chronique* deals inadequately with the individual life, it also falsifies history. If the individual life is devoid of meaning, the sum of all lives is equally empty. Perse does not begin where he should and so he ends nowhere. The abstraction tramples over that which exists and the result is monstrous. The poem needs the saving grace of horror to make it live. But Perse is so in love with elegance that he dare not let the suffering of dying men enter. His style becomes a prison for his thought. Not even the higher powers have the moral right to view our disasters with such equanimity. But this is negative thinking, and Perse has taken care of our kind very neatly. We are dismissed in one line:

> Great age, you lied: a road of glowing embers, not of ash. . . .

As I read these words, they expand to the following: Those who have been unhappy about what has been going on in the twentieth century, who have doubted that everything is "for the best," have been false prophets. Two world wars, a massive depression, an infinite number of revolutions, were merely the sparks which were kindling the great fire of human well-being which is about to flare. Very comforting! But the ash that came to my mind is that which was produced in the Nazi crematoriums. Such atrocities cannot be justified by the notion of human progress. Perse's thought is seen at this point in all of its frivolousness.

I realize, of course, that one has no right to expect an adequate theodicy from Perse or anyone else. All I ask is that the shadows as well as the sunlight be shown. Great poetry is more than an exercise in language. It, no less than philosophy and science, must stay with the facts when it deals in facts. Sentimentality does the spirit no good. All that Perse has done in *Chronique* is to dress up nineteenth century optimism in twentieth century clothes. The poem looks very chic but one

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must not undress it. It is, it seems to me, a perfect poem for Swedish academicians and I would think it could profitably be used to open the proceedings of the United Nations each year.

> Listen, O night, in the deserted courtyards and under the solitary arches, amid the holy ruins and the crumbling of the termite hills, hear the great sovereign footfalls of the soul without a lair.
>
> Like a wild beast prowling a pavement of bronze,
> Great age, behold us. Take the measure of man's heart.

Who would not applaud that? The Jews and the Arabs would be equally enthusiastic. Neither the Soviet nor the American bloc would be offended. Everyone could work himself up into a lather of nobility, and then when the applause died down, proceed with the day's business which is precisely what has been omitted from *Chronique*.

ROBERT LOWELL

Poetry and Meter

THIS BOOK[1] IS REMARKABLE for its scholarship, reasoning and literary taste. These were the three qualities necessary for the undertaking. Few writers possess them, fewer still have been able to combine them, and none that I have read have applied them to this subject with Mr. Thompson's industry and force.

I have nothing to say about the scholarship, except that it is such as only another scholar can adequately admire or profitably dispute. Mr. Thompson is also a man of letters. The best contemporary poetry and criticism are not just part of his study, they are the air he breathes, and the style he practices. Most scholars are not men of letters, but statisticians and warehouses. Their research is their own, but their value judgments are second-hand furniture. On the other hand, the literary man's research is also usually secondhand; he seldom has the gifts and patience to become a scholar.

The quality, however, that I most envy in *The Founding of English Meter* is the author's ability to think through and theorize. He does this with great good sense, stubbornness, clarity, freshness and newness. He sees meter as the conflict and resolution of something definite and

[1] THE FOUNDING OF ENGLISH METER, by John Thompson. Columbia Univ. Press. $5.00.

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something indefinite. The definite is meter itself, everything that is measurable, *a priori,* and subject to rule. The indefinite is speech-rhythm. Here there are no laws, nothing can ever be measurable, and the critic can only depend on his ear, intuition, taste and knowledge of life. This theory, if we can call it a theory, is so simple and sensible that it almost seems a hoax. Mr. Thompson applies it to very complex material, and succeeds where a less steady and energetic mind would have come up with truisms and confusion.

I shall skim through the six chapters separately, because each faces up to different opportunities and problems. Chapter One is mostly about Wyatt, one of the supreme English poets at times, but one whose method is contradictory and much debated. We no longer see him as a blundering pioneer who floundered about trying to be correct in the manner of Sidney. Yet more recent critics have made Wyatt too much of a modern, who was careless of rules and allowed his scansion to follow his ear and feeling for speech. Mr. Thompson scans every debatable line, describes the old four-beat accentual line, the newer accentual-syllabic line, shows the inconsistencies in Tottel, explains what can be explained and shrewdly leaves what must ever remain undecided undecided.

The trouble with the poems in *The Mirror for Magistrates* is that they are bulky, undistinguished, and at odds with the standards and desires of any later period. They are rarely read, almost never with care, and never at all, perhaps, with a fresh eye. Essay after essay gives the same perfunctory dismissals and the same perfunctory praise to Sackville. Mr. Thompson, however, writes, "Dolman's *Hastings* is quite another thing. He varies the relation of his metrical pattern according to his dramatic intention." In this way, the critic makes an important theoretical point and at the same time offers an original discovery.

The chapter on Gascoigne is perhaps more of a logical link than an exploration. I have always felt that Gascoigne's attempt to make metrical accents and speech accents literally coincide was pedantic and that most of his pieces, except for a handful of accidental triumphs, were more fossils than poetry. Yet today we are troubled by the ways in which strict meter cuts into the naturalness of our speech-rhythms. The counterpoint often seems crude and monotonous. After reading Mr. Thompson's discussion, I suspect that Gascoigne was concerned with something that is almost the opposite of metronomic regularity, that speech and meter were *equally* important to him, and that he was troubled, as perhaps no later poet was, by the artifice that removes poetry from life. At the same time he knew that the flux of life was not poetry.

Spenser's *Shepheardes Calendar* has a fine reputation as a museum piece, but like *The Mirror for Magistrates,* it is little read and seldom with much joy or profit. The poetry is mostly a sort of dried cake-frosting. What is more arresting is the metrical experiment, a mixture of the tame, the confused, the archaic and the brilliant. Mr. Thompson

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does more than other critics to map this wilderness, show where the theories are significant, and where good poetry comes through in flashes. The chapter on classical meters shows very clearly what these authors tried to do, how they failed, and how they were driven by something living and important that forced them somewhat accidentally to enlarge the possibilities of English rhythm. Finally Sidney is presented as the first English poet who was a master of strict accentual-syllabic meter, and yet able to vary this meter with a deliberate, controlled and often gorgeous counterpoint of speech-rhythms. Thus Wyatt, Gascoigne and the old accentual poets are brought together in theoretic fulfillment. With this Mr. Thompson's book reaches its own fulfillment. Sidney synthesizes his predecessors, and leaves a mould for the future that was to last for three centuries. Mr. Thompson knows also that Sidney was not necessarily as fine a writer as Wyatt and others, and that much was lost as well as won.

I suppose writers of metrical treatises should resign themselves to being almost as ignorant as the poets they write about. This is a great surrender, and one which might seem to rob the metricist of all that makes his pursuit worth the exercise. Gone now that fascinating, allegorical hunt for hidden, secret laws that all poets must follow and none can describe. Writing on meter is impossible. Indeed, A. E. Housman says in a famous passage, "a few pages of Coventry Patmore and a few more of Frederic Myers contain all so far as I know, or all of value, that has been written on such matters." Elsewhere, however, Housman says about meter, "There is indeed one literary subject on which I think I could discourse with profit, because it is also scientific, so that a man of science can handle it without presumption, and indeed is fitter for the task than most men of letters." Mr. Thompson is both a man of science, in Housman's sense, and a man of letters. No one is better equipped to go on and write, not just a few passages, but a history and explanation of English meter from *Adam lay aboundin* to Auden, and onwards, and no one else is likely to write it.

CORNELIA CLAIBORNE FITZGERALD

Cornelia Claiborne Fitzgerald, an Associate Editor of this Review in 1948 and 1949, died suddenly at her home in Sussex, England, on May 29th of this year. Her enthusiasm and unselfish dedication played a large part in the successful launching of THE HUDSON REVIEW during those early years, and after her departure from the country and her marriage, she continued to maintain an uninterrupted, helpful interest in its affairs. A person of great integrity and sweetness of character, she will be deeply missed by all who knew her. Our heartfelt sympathies are extended to her husband, her three children, and her mother.

THE EDITORS

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